University of Alberta

Plato as Hermeneutic in Heidegger and Levinas

by

Christopher Henry McTavish

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Plato as Hermeneutic in Heidegger and Levinas* submitted by *Christopher Henry McTavish* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *of Master of Arts*.

Dr. Robert Burch (supervisor)

Dr. Jeffrey Dudiak

Dr. Karen Houle

Dr. Amy Schmitter

Dr. Leo Mos

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Abstract

In my thesis I elucidate and juxtapose the different manners in which Heidegger and Levinas each appropriate Plato within the framework of his overall thinking. I demonstrate and argue that the juxtaposition of appropriations renders visible basic features that characterize the theoretical differences separating Heidegger and Levinas. In my juxtaposition I title these basic features: i) a concern for justice, ii) the significance of sociality, and iii) a structure of radical transcendence. I claim, then, that the term 'Plato,' within the thought of Heidegger and Levinas, can function as an interpretive device for exposing the distance separating the two philosophers. My juxtaposition structures an original manner in which to approach the theoretical conflict between Heidegger and Levinas.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	
Introduction	1
I. Interpreting Plato	7
II. Heidegger and Plato	14
III. Levinas and Plato	35
IV. Heidegger's Plato and Levinas' Plato	65
Conclusion	77
Bibliography	90

Abbreviations

Heidegger texts

BT / SZ	*Being and Time* trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986). German: *Sein und Zeit* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960).
OET	"On the Essence of Truth" in *Pathmarks* trans. John Sallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 136-154.
PDT	"Plato's Doctrine of Truth" in *Pathmarks* trans. Thomas Sheehan pp. 155-182.

Levinas texts

EE	*Existence and Existents* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).
OF	"Is Ontology Fundamental?" in *Basic Philosophical Writings* trans. Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) pp. 2-10.
PII	"Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" *Collected Philosophical Papers* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) pp. 47-60.
TI	*Totality and Infinity* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979).

Plato texts

L	"Letters" in *Plato: Complete Works* trans. Glenn R. Morrow (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997) pp. 1634-1676.
P	"Phaedrus" in *Plato: Complete Works* trans. Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff pp. 506-556.
R	*The Republic of Plato* trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968)

Plato as Hermeneutic in Heidegger and Levinas

Introduction

As many commentators have remarked, Plato is both an elusive[1] and a decisive[2] figure in the history of Western philosophy. Even today, whether one follows in a tradition influenced by Nietzsche or by Frege,[3] the presence of Plato can still be felt. And although there remains much interpretive disagreement as to 'what Plato said,'[4] there are still philosophers who draw from Plato's thought in order to work out their own original positions.

In the following thesis I explore two such philosophers – Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas. Both thinkers were influential figures in twentieth century philosophy, and each in his own way awarded a decisive role to Plato within the framework of his overall thinking.

I hope to demonstrate that something philosophically interesting and revealing emerges when their respective appropriations of Plato are juxtaposed. Although Heidegger's reading of Plato has been closely analyzed in the secondary literature,[5] very little has been said concerning Levinas' various incorporations of Plato,[6] and close to nothing has been discussed regarding the precise relationship between these two appropriations.[7] What is instructive about such a juxtaposition, I believe, is that the contrast between the manner in which each interprets Plato parallels their own opposition on central issues such as justice, sociality, and transcendence.

As is commonly known among readers of contemporary European philosophy, Levinas was a relentless critic of 'Heideggerian ontology.' Although at

one time he supported certain features of Heidegger's thought,[8] Levinas later criticized Heidegger's basic 'ontological' project ('the thinking of Being' [*das Denken des Seins*]) for suppressing the ethical relation to the Other. As I will develop in more detail below, upon his break with Heidegger, Levinas formed an original line of thinking in opposition to Heidegger's task of a 'fundamental ontology.'[9] Along with Heidegger, he opposes the tendency in Western philosophy to identify some being (either as a common denominator of beings or as the highest being) as the basis upon which all beings are grounded. But contra Heidegger, he rejects the view that what is most fundamental for speculative thought is a 'concealed source' [*Geheimnis*] that first 'enables' [*ermöglicht*] beings their phenomenal presence.[10] Instead, according to Levinas, that which is most basic for thought and existence surpasses the interpretive horizons of all possible being-ness and Being, into an originary dimension that is *ethical* rather than strictly ontological.

What I will demonstrate in my thesis is that central aspects of Levinas' critique of Heidegger are revealingly magnified in the juxtaposition of their respective appropriations of Plato. Since the disparity between their incorporations of Plato mirrors the general character of their conflict, I will demonstrate that these contrasting appropriations of Plato can function as an interpretive tool for approaching their disagreement. The significance of my project, then, is largely interpretive. It is an attempt to demonstrate that the term 'Plato,' within the thought of Heidegger and Levinas, can act as an interpretive 'cipher' for exposing the distance between their respective theoretical commitments. In this way, I believe my juxtaposition structures

an original manner in which to approach the philosophical conflict between Heidegger and Levinas.

I should note, however, that my goal is not to evaluate whether one interpretation of Plato is more "accurate" than the other. Two reasons motivate my position on this point. First, I believe it is important to recognize that neither Heidegger nor Levinas is concerned with "getting Plato right" in the sense of historical scholarship. Instead, both thinkers are encountering, challenging, and incorporating Plato into their respective attempts to develop an original line of thought. Heidegger is clearest on this point in his book on Kant. In the Preface to *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* he says:

> "[R]eaders have taken constant offense at the violence of my interpretations. Their allegation of violence can indeed be supported by this text. Philosophicohistorical research [*philosophiehistorische Forschung*] is always correctly subject to this charge whenever it is directed against attempts to set in motion a thoughtful dialogue [*denkendes Gespräch*] between thinkers. In contrast to the methods of historical philology, which has its own agenda, a thoughtful dialogue is bound by other laws – laws which are more easily violated. In a dialogue the possibility of going astray is more threatening, the shortcomings are more frequent."[11]

Heidegger's suggestion is that there is a significant difference between the reading of a historical text for the sake of precision ("historical philology") and the engaged encounter with a text for the development of one's own philosophical position ("thoughtful dialogue"). While the former manner of reading favors issues of correctness and accuracy in representation, the latter is not concerned with the trivialities of textual details. As such, Heidegger's "thoughtful dialogue" with a historical text (in this case with Plato) is not of a typical variety; rather, it is an attempt

to formulate a reading that can bring the significance of Plato's thought into the perspective of Heidegger's own speculative standpoint.

Similarly, Levinas' reading of Plato is not trying to render certain passages according to the standard rules of philosophical / philological research. He is instead attempting to highlight Platonic motifs that can either contest or affirm the constellation of his own philosophical beliefs. As he often suggests, his understanding of Plato is developed in a rather personal fashion: "We thus encounter, *in our own way*, the Platonic idea of the Good beyond Being" (*TI* 293). Similar to Heidegger then, Levinas' foremost concern is *not* historical scholarship; it endeavors instead to approach Plato with respect to the ways in which Plato's thought can either challenge or instruct his own philosophical perspective.

Since then neither thinker is interested in "getting Plato right" in the sense of historical scholarship, I believe the issue of whether or not one reading is more accurate than the other fails to appreciate the unique sense in which both philosophers are engaging with Plato. Neither are offering historical reports; both are original thinkers for whom Plato's thought is significant for the presentation of their basic position.

The second rationale motivating my decision not to evaluate the "accuracy" of the two interpretations has to do with Plato's work. Since, for various reasons, a univocal interpretation of Plato is itself problematic, I do not believe it is feasible to properly adjudicate between the two readings. As many commentators have noted,[12] several points arising from Plato scholarship suggest that a standardized interpretation

of Plato already rests on uncertain grounds. As John Sallis has put it: "It is highly questionable whether there is any such thing as the 'philosophy of Plato.'"[13] This is a point on which I will elaborate in Chapter 1; but at this juncture it is sufficient to note that since a single orthodox interpretation of Plato's dialogues is itself problematic, I believe that any adjudication of the two readings already relies on an uncomfortable position, viz. of having to homogenize a thinker (Plato) that may not admit of such a straightforward approach.

Given the preceding considerations, my project is limited to pointing out what can be seen when the different ways in which Heidegger and Levinas appropriate Plato are juxtaposed. It is also worth stressing that my juxtaposition of the two readings occurs at a level "outside" the philosophical attention of both Heidegger and Levinas. That is, there is no textual indication that either philosopher offered their understanding of Plato in order to contest the other's interpretation, or in the case of Heidegger, that he was even aware of Levinas' views. Since neither thinker is engaged in the project of challenging the other's reading, it is worth bearing in mind that the performance of my juxtaposition moves beyond the express intentions of the two philosophers. Nevertheless, I do believe the textual resources *are* available for creating an interpretive space that can properly juxtapose the respective readings of Plato. My basic claim is that an insight into this hermeneutic region is instructive, because it serves to expose the theoretical differences between Heidegger and Levinas.

In what follows, I first develop the view that Plato does not present a homogenous and univocal doctrine. Following a line already established by

contemporary Plato scholarship,[14] I develop this view in order to emphasize that since Plato is an elusive figure for interpretation, the analysis of the role of Plato in the thought of Heidegger and Levinas does not require an adjudicating judgment.

Second, I describe how Plato functions within the two positions. I begin with Heidegger, outlining the general features of his thought and emphasizing those texts where Plato figures as a decisive point of reference. In my presentation of Levinas, I develop how the originality of his thinking emerges in opposition to Heidegger, focusing on those passages that feature an appeal to Plato. Finally, I contrast the two appeals. I do so by demonstrating how Levinas' Plato is characterized by three features that are noticeably absent in Heidegger's Plato. These three features concern: i) the motivation for justice, ii) the role of sociality, and iii) a structure of radical transcendence. I argue that these three points reflect basic aspects of their theoretical conflict.

I. Interpreting Plato

> "Shortly before he died, Plato dreamt that he had become a swan which flew from tree to tree, thereby causing the utmost trouble to the archers who wanted to shoot him down. Simmias the Socratic interpreted the dream as meaning that Plato would elude all the pains of his interpreters. For to archers the interpreters are similar who try to hunt out the hidden meaning of the ancients, but elusive is Plato because his writings, like those of Homer, must be understood in many senses, both physically and ethically, and theologically, and literally."
>
> -Olympiodorus, *Vita Platonis*

As this 5th Century CE story suggests, Plato's writing escapes many of the desires of his interpreters. I believe that there are at least two reasons to maintain the view that Plato escapes a homogenous and univocal reading. Both reasons arise out of difficulties from contemporary Plato scholarship, and both suggest that the issue of adjudicating between various interpretations of Plato rests on problematic grounds.

The first reason concerns the following two statements made in the *Seventh Letter*. Although there is much debate over the provenance of these *Letters*, many explanatory difficulties arise if one denies Plato primary authorship.[15] Speaking of 'philosophic'[16] issues, the author states:

> "There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words." (*L* 341c), and
>
> "No sensible man will venture to express his deepest thoughts in words, especially in a form which is unchangeable, as is true of written outlines." (*L* 343a)

Whoever the author is, however, the claim being advanced in the above two passages suggests a certain obstacle concerning the written word as it relates to philosophical

issues. Such a view interestingly parallels a discussion between Socrates and Phaedrus in the *Phaedrus*:

> SOCRATES: You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse rolls about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its support.
>
> PHAEDRUS: You are absolutely right about that, too.
>
> SOCRATES: Now tell me, can we discern another kind of discourse, a legitimate brother of this one? Can we say how it comes about, and how it is by nature better and more capable?
>
> PHAEDRUS: Which one is that? How do you think it comes about?
>
> SOCRATES: It is a discourse that is written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent.
>
> PHAEDRUS: You mean the living, breathing discourse of a man who knows, of which the written can be fairly called an image. (*P* 275d – 276a)

Much like the claim advanced in the *Letters*, the view presented here by Socrates suggests certain failings of, and difficulties with, the written word [*logos*]. Since the spoken word can "come to its own assistance" (*P* 276e), while the written word is vulnerable to any form of indiscriminate interpretation, Socrates argues for the supremacy of speech over writing. Since both these passages from the *Letters* and the

Phaedrus argue for the derivative character of the written word, any straightforward interpretation of Plato's *written* work is already problematized.[17]

The second, related, difficulty is the fact that almost the entirety of Plato's *oeuvre*, as we've received it, is written in dialogue form.[18] Many have speculated upon the intention underlying this stylistic choice.[19] Some suggest that Plato had political motivations: he did not want to write in such a way that would commit him to the same fate as Socrates. Others speculate that Plato had deeper philosophical reasons for writing in dialogue.[20] Whatever the reason, one effect remains the same: it is very difficult to identify Plato's *own* view. Since in the dialogues views are always presented in and through the characters, the absence of Plato's own voice leaves the reader with the interpretive difficulty of extracting Plato's *own* position.

Some have mitigated this difficulty by suggesting that Plato spoke through the 'mouthpiece' of Socrates.[21] As tempting as this interpretive hypothesis first appears, certain difficulties arise from its implementation.[22] For one, most noticeably and undeniably, Socrates' position often changes amongst the various dialogues. Furthermore, not only does Socrates fail to appear as the chief interlocutor in some of the dialogues,[23] sometimes he does not even participate in its main content.[24]

A common response to these interpretive concerns is to posit a 'developmental thesis.'[25] On this view, any dissonance from dialogue to dialogue records Plato's own intellectual development, and therefore explains any change in his position, his own departure from the 'historical Socrates,' and his vacillation on certain issues.[26]

However, several further interpretive problems arise. Along with the immense obstacle posed by attempts to properly 'psychologize'[27] these decisive breaks in Plato's thought, the developmental thesis also requires an ability to speak of a specific 'doctrine' or 'theory' at any given time (whether it be Socrates' *doctrine*, or a 'middle' or 'late' Platonic *theory*). But it is important to note that none of Plato's characters speak *directly* of a 'doctrine' or a 'theory.'[28] Commenting on the commonly cited Platonic 'theory of Ideas,' Stanley Rosen has stated:

> "As to the 'theory of Ideas,' it is a fiction of nineteenth-century historical scholarship. Despite much quasi-mathematical rhetoric, Plato presents us with a series of *discontinuous poems* about the Ideas."[29]

Although it is tempting, and many commentators do speak of Plato's 'theory of Ideas,'[30] it is very difficult to identify such a straightforward position anywhere in the Platonic *oeuvre* without imposing anachronistic categories. That is, such a reading divides Plato's thought under later classifications such as 'epistemology' or 'metaphysics,'[31] even though such terms never appear in Plato's own dialogues.

Further problems arise when the difficulty in plotting the precise chronology of Plato's dialogues is considered.[32] For one, there is evidence from ancient interpretations that Plato re-worked certain dialogues throughout his lifetime, leading one to suspect that perhaps the so-called 'later' Plato is present in what we now term the 'middle' work.[33] Second, there is no 'internal' evidence that Plato ever understood his own view as 'developmental,' since he never identified his own thought in such a way.[34] And finally, it is commonly acknowledged that the dialogues themselves often don't proceed in what could be called a 'historical' sequence.[35] This entails that the

'developmental thesis' cannot properly appeal to datable events in the dialogues in order to chronologize Plato's 'historical' development. That is, the attempt to chronologize the dialogues in terms of a 'historical' development depends upon the truth of such a development. But there is no genuine evidence to corroborate the initial hypothesis of such a 'historical' development, unless one already believes that hypothesis to be true. Jacob Howland has assessed the circularity of this scenario in the following way:

> "Claims about the proper philosophic sequence of the dialogues cannot be used to establish a correct chronology if such claims themselves rest upon chronological assumptions…[Meanwhile] references in the dialogues to datable historical events are irrelevant to the relative chronology of the dialogues. Such references tell us only that Plato worked on a certain dialogue after a certain date. They do not tell us when Plato began to write the dialogue in question, nor do they tell us anything about the relative dates of the dialogues that happen to contain no references to datable historical events."[36]

Since the 'developmental thesis' depends upon such problematic premises, it becomes very difficult for it to properly identify Plato's *own* view within his dialogues.

Although it is difficult to imagine that Plato's own view is *radically* different from those voiced in his dialogues, the above mentioned interpretive difficulties have led some commentators to doubt that Plato should be read as a systematic thinker presenting a univocal doctrine. Wolfgang Wieland has claimed that unless one imports a certain theoretical bias, it is very difficult to extract an overall position from Plato's dialogues. He bases this claim on the fact that the dialogues only offer the following sorts of elements:

> "[q]uestions, assertions, allusions, mentionings, figures of speech, hints to apparent truisms [*Selbstverständlichkeiten*]. It may be that these

> things can only be made intelligible on the basis of a comprehensive theory. However, such a theory would be in each case a reconstruction of the interpreter"[37]

Stanley Rosen has suggested that if one maintains the view that Plato's intention was to propose some form of a systematic theory for his readers, this would entail a rather bizarre conclusion:

> "If Plato possessed a homogenous doctrine of a fundamentally scientific nature which he wished to communicate in a univocal manner to all readers, then his choice of the dialogue form betrays a singular incompetence."[38]

For these two reasons sketched above, it should be clear that it is reasonable to maintain the position that Plato's own thought eludes a straightforward, easily standardized interpretation. Unlike other texts in the history of Western philosophy (e.g. the 'treatises' of the British empiricists or the systems of knowledge in German Idealism), Plato's writing distances itself from his interpreters since, rather than stating his own position with the straightforwardness of propositions, he instead appears to invite readers to reflect upon certain obscurities, philosophical and otherwise.

I have raised these issues because I want to emphasize that interpreting the role of Plato in the thought of Heidegger and Levinas does not necessitate a judgment about "correctness." Not only are both philosophers unconcerned with rendering Plato according to the exactitude of historical scholarship, but Plato himself is unique in that his dialogues appear to be intrinsically elusive. Given this enigmatic dimension, the attempt to adjudicate the better from the worse already homogenizes a thinker who does not admit of such a straightforward interpretation. But the issue does not have to be who was more accurate, or whether Heidegger or Levinas got Plato 'right,' since,

for the reasons sketched above, any answer to such a question already rests on problematic grounds. What is more interesting about their respective appeals, I suggest, is how their different incorporations of Plato reflect their own philosophical commitments. Plato, even in light of these interpretive difficulties, can function as a hermeneutic for interpreting the differences between Heidegger and Levinas, since, I claim, the respective ways in which he is appropriated reveals the opposition between the two.

II. Heidegger and Plato

> "Plato's thinking follows the change in the essence of truth, a change that becomes the history of metaphysics…Thus Plato's doctrine [*Lehre*] of "truth" is not something that is past. It is historically "present," not just in the sense that his teachings have a "later effect" that historians can calculate, nor as a reawakening or imitation of antiquity, not even as the mere preservation of what has been handed down. Rather, *this change in the essence of truth is present as the all-dominating fundamental reality* – long established and thus still in place – of the ever-advancing world history of the planet *in this most modern of modern times*."
>
> -Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth"[39]

Heidegger's interpretation of Plato has been the subject of a number of commentaries.[40] Although only one of Heidegger's essays is specifically devoted to Plato ("Plato's Doctrine of Truth"), Plato appears in a number of Heidegger's texts, spanning a period of over 50 years.[41] Through an exposition of relevant passages from *Being and Time*[42] and the essay "On the Essence of Truth,"[43] in this chapter, I will first outline Heidegger's position on focal topics of the essence of truth and Being. Not only do these two topics help to introduce Heidegger's reading of Plato, they also prepare the way for an understanding of Levinas' opposition to Heidegger. Next, I will discuss Heidegger's interpretation of Plato. My account of Heidegger's reading will concentrate on his primary work on this topic: his 1940 essay "Plato's Doctrine of Truth."[44] I believe that the straightforwardness and lucidity of this essay offers the best manner in which to approach Heidegger's relationship to Plato.[45]

Heidegger

At the outset of *Being and Time*, Heidegger expresses the need for a 'repetition' [*Wiederholung*] of the "question concerning the meaning of Being

[*Sein*[46]]" (*BT* 1 / *SZ* 2). He introduces the content of this unique question in the following manner:

> "What is *asked about* in the question to be elaborated is Being [*Sein*], that which determines beings as beings [*Seiendes als Seiendes*], that in terms of which [*woraufhin*] beings have always already [*je schon*] been understood no matter how they are discussed. (*BT* 4 / *SZ* 6)

Heidegger's question concerns that, 'on the basis of which' [*Woraufhin*], beings are ultimately understood *as* the beings that they are (viz., the being of meaning[47]). He claims that although particular beings (e.g., man, nature, God) are 'interrogated' [*abgefragt*] in the raising of this question, this is not a question whose scope is exclusive to those beings available to intentional consciousness. Rather, beyond such 'ontic' beings, Heidegger's question is asking about the 'ontological horizon' [*ontologische Horizont*] in which particular beings are 'always already' [*je schon*] understood as *what* they are. That is, Heidegger's question is asking about that which *originally grounds* all possible intentional access to beings. Not, however, in the sense of a fixed transcendental structure that has permitted this access univocally and necessarily, but rather as a finite, epochal suite of contexts of meaning that is historical as the history of Being.

By framing his question in terms of a 'repetition' [*Wiederholung*], Heidegger states that the proper exposition of his question is an attempt to retrieve what has now become 'forgotten' [*vergessen*] (*BT* 1 / *SZ* 2). Such a retrieval consists, he claims, of *recovering* that which was initially raised at the "Greek point of departure" (*BT* 1 / *SZ* 2). He curiously states that although the meaning of Being first "troubled ancient philosophizing" (*BT* 1 / *SZ* 2), several contemporary prejudices, all "rooted in ancient

ontology itself" (*BT* 2 / *SZ* 3), have blocked the specific raising of this question in modern times.

These opening statements suggest an intriguing ambiguity the 'Greek point of departure' holds for Heidegger's overall project of advancing the question concerning the meaning of Being. On the one hand, he is attempting to *recover* the issue of Being, first raised "albeit in fragments and first beginnings" (*BT* 1 / *SZ* 2) in ancient philosophy,[48] while on the other hand, that which today is impeding the raising of Being as a *question*, is "rooted in ancient philosophizing itself" (*BT* 2 / *SZ* 3). Thus Heidegger understands his project as intricately related to re-thinking (by way of questioning) this ambiguity at the beginning of Western philosophy – an origin that both attempted to think the meaning of Being, and also supplied the conceptual tools that have led to the contemporary opposition to raising the meaning of Being as a question today.

To approach a re-thinking of this ambiguity, Heidegger's project further calls for a "destructuring [*Destruktion*] of the history of ontology" (*BT* 17 / *SZ* 19). With this appeal, he seeks to overcome the contemporary prejudices that are obstructing the explicit raising of this question in the present day.[49] That is, in order to properly *ask* this question, the historical emergence of the conceptual structures that have led to the forgetting of Being must be systematically broken down. He says:

> "If the question of Being is to achieve clarity regarding its own history, a loosening of the sclerotic [*verhärteten*] tradition and a dissolving of the concealments produced by it is necessary. We understand this task as the destructuring of the traditional content of ancient ontology which is to be carried out along the *guidelines of the question of Being*. This destructuring is based upon the original experiences in which the first

> and subsequently guiding determinations of beings were granted." (*BT* 20 / *SZ* 22)

Heidegger tells us here that his dialogue with the tradition is in terms of the ontological question of Being. As we will soon see, his reading of Plato is largely informed by this "destructuring" project. On his account, Plato's thought stands as a conceptual foundation to this "sclerotic" tradition that has obscured the question concerning the meaning of Being. It stands as such, since, according to Heidegger, Plato so decisively determined a curious ambiguity at the 'Greek point of departure,' i.e. he supplied the conceptual tools that have led to the covering over of the primordial access to thinking Being.

His reading of Plato on this point is most clearly presented in the essay "Plato's Doctrine of Truth." In this essay, he claims that the "unsaid" of Plato's cave allegory is the unique sense in which a "transformation in the essence of truth" (*PDT* 176) takes place, i.e. seemingly unbeknownst to Plato himself, the cave allegory in fact signals a change in what determines the essence of truth. To properly see the central significance of the "essence of truth" for Heidegger's overall project however, it will be advantageous to my discussion to first overview his 1943 essay "On the Essence of Truth" [*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*]. As one commentator has put it: "all paths of the Heideggerian phenomenology lead to the essence of truth."[50] In this 1943 essay, Heidegger carefully outlines the decisive connection between the essence of truth and Being. Therefore, an overview of this essay will be helpful to my thesis since it makes clear the way in which Heidegger bases his reading of Plato's "transformation in the essence of truth."

As the title and opening line of the essay "On the Essence of Truth" indicates, the 'topic' [*Rede*] for the essay (its proper *Sache selbst*) is the "*essence* of truth" (*OET* 136). As a question of *essence*, Heidegger points out that this question is not concerned with particular truths (e.g. whether they be scientific, technical, or economical), but rather, first, with the "one thing that in general distinguishes every 'truth' as truth" (*OET* 136).

To avoid "falling into the groundlessness of all philosophy" (*OET* 136) that this "extravagant" question seems to raise, Heidegger begins with his usual strategy[51] - he starts with the 'common' [*geläufige*] everyday understanding of truth. This common-sensical concept of truth reveals itself as 'accordance' [*Übereinstimmung*]. He demonstrates that this 'accordance' can obtain in two seemingly different ways: either materially, between a guiding idea and the matter at hand, or else propositionally, between what is meant by a proposition and the state of affairs meant to be accorded (*OET* 138). In both senses however, what *essentially* unites each truth *as* truth is a 'correct correspondence' [*Richtig Angleichung*] between what is intended to be accorded.

Though this common conception of truth might seem obvious today, Heidegger reminds the reader that it is not without its history. Although he hints at a deeper origin yet,[52] his historical survey begins with the medieval formula *adaequatio intellectus et rei.* On the medieval model, ideas preconceived in the mind of God (*intellectus divinus*) serve as the standard to which ideas in the human mind (*intellectus humanus*) must accord in order to be 'true.' Heidegger points out that

although the modern era emphasized a different criterion, the basic requirement of correct accordance was still maintained. In the modern period, since 'worldly reason' [*Weltvernunft*] supplies the law for itself, philosophical thinking "detaches itself" from the notion of creation and therefore adjudicates what is 'true' in terms of what is intelligible (*OET* 139).

Heidegger states that the predominance of this concept of truth is so entrenched that:

> "[e]ven [today] where an effort is made – with a conspicuous lack of success – to explain how correctness is to occur, it is already presupposed as being the essence of truth" (*OET* 139)

In the face of such contemporary presuppositions however, Heidegger does *ask* about the possibility of correct accordance. He asks this question not to undermine the common conception of truth (i.e. not to point out that it is 'false') but rather to think through the conditions that first make it possible. He notices that if the *essence* of truth is taken to reside in 'correct accordance,' then the *relationship* between what is accorded (whether materially or propositionally) must remain "manifestly different" (*OET* 140). For example, the immateriality of the proposition 'the coin is round' can correctly accord with the material phenomenon of the coin's roundness, only on the condition that the statement remains *immaterial* while the phenomenon remains *material*. For if either of these 'relata' [*Bezogenen*] changed in their status (e.g. the proposition lost its immateriality by, absurdly, becoming either round or a coin) the correctness of the accordance would no longer be said to hold.

So Heidegger asks: how is it that these two relata can be so manifestly different, indeed so *necessarily* different, and yet still be said to be in accordance with one another? To properly answer this question, Heidegger's thought endeavors a transformation in the thinking of *essence*. He moves from thinking about *essence* in terms of "what-ness" (i.e. as a *quiddity*: the oneness that can unify superficial differences), and attempts instead to think *essence* in terms of the 'enabling conditions of possibility'[53] [*ermöglichunges Bedingungen der Möglichkeit*], viz. he endeavors to think the *essence* of truth in terms what enables the possibility of correct accordance.

To do so, he introduces the spatial model[54] of an 'open region' [*Offenen*]. In the open region, a distance demarcates the 'opposedness' [*Entgegen*] between what is 'opened up' [*Offenbare*] and what is being intended by a proposition (*OET* 141). By 'opposedness,' Heidegger does not mean an antithetical relation between the proposition and the thing opened up. Rather, this relationship is said to be 'opposed' in the sense that both the statement and the thing each takes its 'stand' [*Standiges*] in terms of itself. That is, the open region is the space in which the requisite differences between propositions and objects can stand next to one another.

Heidegger further claims that, within the space of this 'opposed standing' [*Entgegenstehende*], the distance between propositions and objects can be 'traversed' [*Durchmessen*] when, according to "the particular perspective that guides [them]," (*OET* 141) statements that stand in the open region 'set forth' [*vor-stellt*] what is opened up. Statements that traverse this space *correctly*, i.e. statements that properly adhere to the 'directive' [*Weisung*] to speak of beings such as they appear, are then

said to be *true*. They are said to be true, because they have overcome the opposed standing of the relata by correctly following the 'openness' [*Offenheit*] of the open region. That is, statements become true by correctly adhering to the way in which that which is opened up properly stands in the domain of the relatedness.

To make sense of Heidegger's use of these spatial concepts, it is worth bearing in mind that he is not somehow suggesting that the correspondence theory of truth is "false." Rather, he is incorporating the correspondence theory by attempting to think through to the 'enabling conditions' [*ermöglichung Bedingungen*] that allow for such a concept of truth. His claim is that the correctness of accordance initially requires a space (open region) within which the differences (opposedness) between statement and thing can stand (as next to one another). These differences are overcome, i.e. correspond with one another, on the condition that statements can subordinate themselves (follow the directive) to speak of beings *such-as* they appear (in their intentional structure). By following this directive, Heidegger claims that speech, from within the domain of relatedness, can accord with what manifests itself and can therefore be said to be true.

As he notes next however, this still leaves open the question as to *how* this enabling directive accords from within the open region (*OET* 142), i.e. how the subordinating directive to speak of beings, such-as they are, is primarily 'binded' [*bindet*]. Since this question asks about what 'grounds' [*Grund*] the enabling conditions, Heidegger's thought must once again transform the issue of *essence*, viz. the *essence* of truth now becomes a question concerning what grounds the possibility

of receiving the directive to speak of beings such as they are. Anticipating much resistance, Heidegger states that *freedom* constitutes this 'ground of the enabling' [*Grund der Ermöglichung*] (*OET* 142).

To explain this "seemingly arbitrary" (*OET* 143) statement, Heidegger considers two models of freedom: freedom as capriciousness and freedom as necessity. He argues that neither model can capture the basic meaning of freedom, because neither explains how the engagement is originally informed (*OET* 143-144). That is, by narrowing the understanding of freedom to either a passive or an active 'choosing' amongst beings, both models fail to consider the way in which choosing or choice is first grounded. In contrast then, prior to both models, Heidegger describes freedom as a 'letting beings be' [*Seinlassen von Seindem*]. Although this expression may suggest a neglect or indifference toward beings, Heidegger states that 'to let be' should not be understood as the carelessness or renouncement of beings. Instead, to 'let beings be' means to

> "[e]ngage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself" (*OET* 144)

Heidegger's basic claim is that prior to choosing and acting upon particular beings (whether passively or actively) freedom is an engagement with the interpretive possibilities of the openness (context) of the open region. That is, the accessibility of acting upon beings depends upon an *interpretive engagement with the contextual horizon* within which beings are manifested.

According to Heidegger then, to be able to speak of particular beings means that beings have *already emerged* into the presence of what can be spoken of (have already been disclosed in a certain way). This process of emerging into presence, i.e. the 'releasement' [*Gelassenheit*] of beings into the presence of what can be said, is intricately tied to an interpretive engagement with that context which holds together the totality of manifested beings (the openness of the open region). In this way, Heidegger claims that "the human being does not 'possess' freedom as a property," instead "at best, the converse holds: freedom…possesses the human being" (*OET* 145). Freedom 'possesses' [*besitz*] the human being on his view, because understood in the originary sense of 'letting beings be,' the possibilities for human action are ultimately dependent upon the interpretive horizon (context of meaning) within which human beings always already find themselves.

Therefore, on Heidegger's account, the directive to speak of beings *such-as* they are (correct accordance) not only requires opposed standing in the open region (standing in the presence of what has emerged), but it also depends upon an obedience to the openness of that open region (the contextual framework of meaning), since it is terms of the latter that beings are originarily disclosed.

By now thinking the *essence* of truth in terms of an originative disclosure, Heidegger refers once again to the 'Greek point of departure.' He says:

> "Western thinking in its beginning conceived this open region as *tà alethéa*, the unconcealed. If we translate *alétheia* as "unconcealment" [*Unverborgenheit*] rather than "truth," this translation is not merely "more literal"; it contains the directive to rethink the ordinary concept of truth in the sense of the correctness of statements and to think it back to

> that still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings" (*OET* 144)

Heidegger's etymological reading of the Ancient Greek word for truth – *alétheia* – has been the subject of a number of critical commentaries.[55] And for our purposes we will soon see how the specifics of this etymological reading will become central to his interpretation of Plato. For the moment, however, it is worth noticing how his understanding of this term connects to his account of truth as originary disclosure. By translating *alétheia* as 'unconcealment' [*Unverborgenheit*] rather than as 'truth' [*Wahrheit*], Heidegger is attempting to emphasize the unique intensive function of the Greek "alpha-privative" *a-*. That is, in the Greek word for truth, *a-létheia*, the word's root '**lath-*' ('concealment' / 'hiddenness') appears to be curiously negated by the prefixed alpha.[56] With the German prefix *Un-*, then, Heidegger is trying to stress the curious positive sense of the privative. Via his etymological reading, he is suggesting that it was fundamental to early Greek thought to experience the emergence of beings in terms of a hidden concealed source, viz. that 'truth' originally meant a "wresting away from what was hidden" (*OET* 171).

Such an 'early' experience of truth closely parallels Heidegger's view of originary disclosure. For Heidegger, correctness of statements ultimately depends upon an interpretive engagement (freedom) with the contextual openness in which beings are first revealed. This, of course, does not mean that Heidegger believes the correspondence theory of truth is 'false,' but rather that the correspondence theory is derivative upon the more primordial phenomenon of originative disclosure, i.e. the prior emergence of beings into the presence of what can be said.

As we now watch Heidegger's view of truth develop, we see the following formulation begin to emerge: *if* truth primordially means (as it did for the early Greeks) disclosure or unhiddenness, and *if* we 'today' (as we have *at least* since the Medievals) understand the essence of truth in terms of the correctness of statements, *then* there must have been a moment when the primordial conception of truth was passed over (and forgotten) by the latter view.[57] To the issue of *when* this happened, Heidegger's most explicit answer comes in the essay "Plato's Doctrine of Truth." As to *how* this happened, Heidegger makes the following remark in "On the Essence of Truth":

> "[f]rom the point of view of everyday calculations and preoccupations this [originative disclosure][58] appears to be incalculable and incomprehensible. It cannot be understood on the basis of the beings opened up in any given case, whether they belong to nature or to history. Although it ceaselessly brings everything into definite accord, still it remains indefinite, indeterminable; it then coincides for the most part with what is most fleeting and most unconsidered" (*OET* 147-148)

As that which ultimately enables the calculation of beings, the process of disclosive emergence (interpretive engagement with the openness) is not some-thing (a being) that can be fixed in terms of an accordance. Therefore, according to the view that takes the true to merely consist in the correctness of statements, such a process of emergence becomes a "fleeting" nothingness, because there is no intentional object whose *essence* can be knowingly accorded. Or, as Heidegger has put it elsewhere,[59] by narrowing the view of the true to the *essential* 'present-ness' [An-*wesen*-heit] of those objects immediately given to intentional assimilation, the non-intentional 'presencing' of objects (their flowering-forth into manifestation) get passed over.[60]

The 'presencing' gets passed over, because the emergent opening-forth of beings does not answer to a question of *essence*. That is, how beings 'presence' (their coming-into-being as an intentional object) points toward something that escapes the intentional grasp, since the process of emergence precedes the intentional structure of an 'according' *essence*.

Since Heidegger clearly does not think originary disclosure is a fleeting nothingness, and since he believes thinking about the true and the real in terms of *essences* has led to its being covered over (and hence forgotten), he makes the following, rather startling, claim:

> "The proper non-essence [*Un-wesen*] of truth is the mystery [*Geheimnis*]. Here non-essence does not have the sense of what is general (*koinón*, *génos*), its *possibilitas* and the ground of its possibility. Non-essence is here what in such a sense would be a pre-essential essence…[t]he "non" of the originary non-essence of truth, as un-truth [*Un-wahrheit*] points to the still unexperienced domain of the truth of Being [*Sein*] (not merely of beings [*Seienden*])" (*OET* 148-149)

On Heidegger's account, a 'hidden source' [*Geheimnis*] conserves the presence and absence of what is revealed (*OET* 148). As a *concealed* source however, that which originally enables disclosure in fact *precedes* all talk of *essence* as a quidditas, as a condition of possibility, and even as the ground of the conditions. Rather, *how* it is that beings unfold (i.e. how beings come-to-'be' and abide in the presence of what is present), in principle escapes the possibility of intentional comprehension.

Heidegger insists however, that although the originary disclosure is not itself a 'being' [*Seiendes*], this does not mean that it should coincide with what is most unconsidered. As he argues, since the relationship with intentional beings (correct

accordance) *depends upon* an interpretive engagement with the context (openness) in which beings first emerge, philosophical thinking should, as a 'gentle releasement' [*Gelassenhiet der Milde*], attend to the *difference* between what has emerged (presence) and what remains hidden (absence) (*OET* 152). That is, as he says above, thinking should attend itself to the manifesting *process* of disclosive emergence. Such thinking, he claims, points toward the truth of Being [*Sein*] - not in the sense of an intentional being [*Seiendes*], but in the sense of that which originally enables the disclosure of beings, i.e. that which determines beings as beings.

For Heidegger then, the question regarding the meaning of Being is not a question exclusive to particular beings available to intentional consciousness. Contemporary prejudices to the contrary, he claims that his question does not concern either a mere 'nothingness' or a common denominator of beings. Rather, prior to intentional beings, his question asks about that 'on the basis of which' [*Woraufhin*] beings are understood *as* beings, i.e. that which first enables the intentional accessibility of beings. Such questioning, he argues, thinks through the correctness of intentional accordance to the interpretive engagement with the openness (contextual horizon) in which beings are first disclosed. That is, the essence of truth as a correctness of accordance, ultimately depends upon the primordial phenomenon of standing obedient to the interpretive possibilities that ultimately preserve what remains hidden and what emerges into presence. According to Heidegger then, by thinking through the *essence* of truth in this way, philosophy recalls the fundamental *difference* between Being and beings, i.e. the difference that originally enables the understanding of beings *as* beings.

Heidegger's Plato

In "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," Heidegger contends that Plato both experienced and presupposed the priority of a hidden source (evidenced in the Ancient Greek term *alétheia*), but that he subordinated this experience in favor of a conception of truth as the correctness of vision. His reading of Plato concludes by considering how this "transformation [*Wandel*] in the essence of truth" (*PDT* 177) initiated the unwavering history of truth as the correctness of accordance, and how it has therefore covered over the modern ability to think the *difference* between Being and beings.

His essay focuses on Plato's cave 'image' (*eikon*) at 514a2-517a7 of the *Republic*. At the outset of the essay, Heidegger claims that his interpretation will be an attempt to follow the "unsaid" of Plato's thought. Although his intent may be difficult to decipher,[61] at the very least, it is clear that his reading of Plato's "unsaid" is an attempt to capture something not overtly stated (or recognized) in Plato's own thought.

To enter into this "unsaid," as he pointed out in the essay "On the Essence of Truth," Heidegger first directs his reader to the unique construction of the Ancient Greek word for truth (*alétheia*). He suggests yet again that the peculiar negating function of the alpha-privative (*a-*) says something important about early Greek experience. He says:

> "Originally for the Greeks hiddenness, as an act of self-hiding, permeated the essence of being and thus also determined beings in their presentness and accessibility ("truth"); and that is why the Greek word for what the Romans call "*veritas*" and for what we call "truth" was distinguished by the alpha-privative (*a-létheia*). Truth originally means what has been wrested from hiddenness" (*PDT* 171)

On Heidegger's etymological interpretation, the term *alétheia* appears to imply that the early Greeks had a decisive sense of an *a priori* hiddenness that pervaded the disclosure of beings. He further points out that the very inspiration to present a 'cave' story in fact rests upon this fundamental experience of the unhiddenness of beings. Commenting upon Plato's motivation to write a 'cave allegory' he says:

> "The "allegory" can have the structure of a cave image at all because it is antecedently co-determined by the fundamental experience of *alétheia*, the unhiddenness of beings, which was something self-evident for the Greeks. For what else is the underground cave except something open in itself that remains at the same time covered by a vault and, despite the entrance, walled off and enclosed by the surrounding earth?" (*PDT* 172)

Despite Plato's presupposition of this 'self-evident' experience however, Heidegger argues that Plato's cave image ultimately subordinates the experience of unhiddenness. Immediately following his comment upon Plato's motivation, Heidegger next says:

> "And yet, even though *alétheia* is properly experienced in the "allegory of the cave" and is mentioned in it at important points, nonetheless in place of unhiddenness another essence of truth pushes to the fore" (*PDT* 172)

To showcase such a 'change' [*Wandel*] in the essence of truth, Heidegger's reading focuses on the transitions within the cave story. From within the shadows of Plato's cave, Heidegger reads each 'turn' [*wenden*] (from the stages of darkness into the light) as moments whereby the unhiddenness of beings is subordinated by the 'correctness of the gaze' [*Richtigerwerden des Blikens*]. That is, on Heidegger's account, each successive movement, whether it be from the shadows to the artifacts or

from the firelight to the sun, is decisively determined by the correctness of vision. He writes:

> "The movement of passage from one place to another consists in the process whereby the gaze becomes more correct. Everything depends upon the *orthotes*, the correctness of the gaze [*Richtigerwerden des Blikens*]" (*PDT* 177)

Everything depends upon the gaze, Heidegger claims, because Plato appeals to the *idéa* in order to initiate the movement from each stage within the cave allegory. Since Plato makes such an appeal, Heidegger believes an *orthotic* conception of truth (correctness of accordance) subordinates the experience of the unhiddenness of beings. Heidegger maintains that such a subordination occurs, since, rather than understanding beings in terms of their emergence from a hidden source, Plato has determined the truth of beings according to the structure of an intentional apprehension:

> "In so directing itself, apprehending conforms itself to what is to be seen: the "visible form" of the being. What results from this conforming of apprehension, as an *idein*, to the *idéa* is a *omoiosis*, an agreement of the act of knowing with the thing itself. Thus, the priority of *idéa* and *idein* over *alétheia* results in a transformation in the essence of truth. Truth becomes *orthotes*, the correctness of apprehending and asserting" (*PDT* 177)

On Heidegger's reading, Plato's thinking 'transforms the essence of truth' since Plato's pivotal appeal to the *idéa* has occasioned a shift in the basic locus of the truth of beings. Instead of acknowledging the unhidden emergence of beings, 'truth' for Plato now resides in the correctness of eidetic vision.

Nevertheless, despite this "unspoken event" (*PDT* 176) in Plato's thought, Heidegger further notes that Plato must still hold on to 'unhiddenness' as a characteristic of beings:

> "[i]n a certain way Plato has to hold on to "truth" as still a characteristic of beings, because a being, as something present, has being precisely by appearing, and being brings unhiddenness with it. But at the same time, the inquiry into what is unhidden shifts in the direction of the appearing visible form…For this reason there is a necessary ambiguity in Plato's doctrine" (*PDT* 177)

The ambiguity consists in the fact that 'unhiddenness' is named in Plato's cave allegory, but the correctness of eidetic vision is posited as normative and decisive. Heidegger believes that this "necessary ambiguity" in Plato's thought can even be observed in a single passage. In the line (517b7-c5) that immediately follows the cave allegory, Heidegger translates "Plato's own interpretation" (*PDT* 177) in the following manner:

> "The idea of the good (*he tou agathou idéa*)…is the original source (i.e., the enabling of the essence) of everything correct as well as everything beautiful. It is the mistress who bestows unhiddenness as well as apprehension" (*PDT* 177)

The ambiguity rests on the fact that 'the idea of the good' *both* enables the correctness of vision *and* the unhiddenness of beings. In this way, an *idéa* 'yokes together' [*Joche spannt*] both the act of knowing and the beings to be known (*PDT* 177). That is, the source of the unhiddenness of beings (what enables their disclosure) depends upon the human eidetic insight into 'the idea of the good' (*he tou agathou idéa*). As a result, *alétheia* is subordinated by the correctness of vision, because the truth of beings no longer rests upon the way in which beings 'unfold' [*entfalten*] from out of their hiddenness, but rather in terms of the way in which beings are most clearly seen.

Heidegger further claims that Plato's subordination of this ambiguity between unhiddenness and correctness gets decided 'historically.' Like Plato, Aristotle understood *alétheia* (unhiddenness) as the "fundamental trait of beings" (*PDT* 178), but Heidegger points out that Aristotle too defined truth in the following way: "the false and the true are not in things (themselves)...but in the intellect" (*Meta.* 1027b 25). On Heidegger's account, for Aristotle, the essence of truth ultimately resides in the judgment made by the intellect (*PDT* 178). In this way, since truth in Aristotle is now determined by the correctness of human calculation, truth as originative disclosure is already being covered over.

Thus, Heidegger then claims that this "transformation" in Plato from unhiddenness to correctness is in fact normative for the "whole of Western thinking" (*PDT* 178). He cites passages from Aquinas,[62] Descartes,[63] and Nietzsche,[64] all to the effect that truth and falsity ultimately reside in the intellect.

The significance of this 'transformation,' on Heidegger's view, is nothing less than a history that has successively centered mankind within the sphere of beings (humanism), culminating in the homogeny of interpretive possibilities (nihilism) (*PDT* 181). That is, by subordinating unhiddenness to the correctness of apprehension, Heidegger claims that Plato's "transformation" receives its final expression in the "all-dominating fundamental reality" (*PDT* 181) of the interpretive restrictions to the contemporary context of meaning. For, within this interpretive context, the true and the real are effectively narrowed to the controllable and the manipulable. On Heidegger's account then, Plato's 'transformation' is "historically present" not just in

the sense of "having an effect," but for having laid down the basis for "what is really happening in the history of Western humanity" (*PDT* 181-182).

Conclusion

In this way we can see how Plato's thought is decisive for Heidegger's overall project. In attempting to retrieve the *forgotten* question concerning the meaning of Being, his project required the overcoming of the tradition that thinks Being [*Sein*] in terms of some being [*Seiendes*].[65] He claimed at the outset of *Being and Time* that the overcoming of this tradition required a 'dissolving' of the traditional content of ancient ontology. Having now traced: i) his account of truth as originative disclosure (i.e. in terms of an obedience to interpretive possibilities), and ii) his reading of Plato's "transformation" of the essence of truth, we now see how Plato functions within Heidegger's general position. For Heidegger, Plato's suppression of unhiddenness (*alétheia*) for the correctness of vision has led to the covering over and forgetting of the fundamental difference between Being and beings. Plato's privileging of correctness has led to this covering over, Heidegger maintains, because it provides a framework that ultimately interprets the real and the true in terms of what is readily available to intentional consciousness.

Therefore Heidegger's reading of Plato takes the form of a 'destructuring' [*Destruktion*]. That is, the conceptual structures of Plato's thought must be systematically broken down in order to illuminate an access to thinking the primordial. This destructuring project informs Heidegger's reading of Plato, because he holds that truth ultimately means originative disclosure, and because he claims that this concept

of truth was passed over due to Plato's suppression of an ambiguity at the 'Greek point of departure.'

III. Levinas and Plato

> "My teaching remains, in the final account, quite classical; it repeats, as in Plato, that it is not that consciousness founds the Good but that the Good calls to consciousness."
>
> -Emmanuel Levinas, "Dialogue on Thinking-of-the-Other"

Unlike Heidegger's reading of Plato's suppression of an ambiguity in the concept of truth, Emmanuel Levinas appeals to Plato in order to emphasize a distinctive *moral dimension*, and to "rediscover"[66] [*retrouver*] in Plato a structure of *primordial transcendence*. Through a reading of select passages from the essays: "Is Ontology Fundamental?" and "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," as well as the texts: *Existence and Existents* and *Totality and Infinity*, I will outline in the first half of this chapter Levinas' general position as it emerges in opposition to Heidegger. In the second half, I will explain the different ways in which Levinas' thought draws from Plato. Since (unlike Heidegger) Levinas never specifically devoted an essay to Plato's thought, and since, also, Levinas never fully explained *why* he appealed to Plato,[67] the second half of my chapter will attempt to assemble and "construct" Levinas' interpretation from various interspersed references. I will claim that Levinas' differing appeals to Plato fall under three leading themes: i) a structure of primordial transcendence, ii) the significance of other persons, and iii) the motivation for justice.

Levinas

Although Levinas would eventually become a leading critic of 'Heideggerian ontology,' it is worth pointing out that during an early stage in his philosophical development (the late 1920's and early 1930's at the Universities of Strasbourg and Freiburg) he felt a great appreciation and admiration for Heidegger's

advances in the field of phenomenology. Heidegger's influence on Levinas' formative thinking can be observed in two places.

The first can be found in the conclusion to his 1930 dissertation *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology,* in which text Levinas reveals his early respect for Heidegger while commenting up Heidegger's relationship to Husserl's phenomenological project. He states: "[Heidegger] appears to follow in the way indicated by Husserl…although in a profoundly original manner, and we feel justified in being inspired by him."[68]

This admiration for Heidegger appears to have carried over into 1932, when Levinas began to work on a book-length study on the innovation of Heidegger's developments.[69] Although he soon abandoned his book when Heidegger's political commitments to Nazism became known, a small fragment of Levinas' study was published (that year) under the title "Martin Heidegger and Ontology."[70] The publication of this essay once again displays Levinas' early support for the significance of Heidegger's thought. On his account, Heidegger's great achievement was his resistance to the Western philosophical tendency to place the theorizing subject at the center of all possible forms of existing. According to Levinas' emphasis, rather than thinking Being [*l'être*] as some intentional being [*étants*] for theoretical integration, Heidegger had demonstrated that the reverse (i.e. thinking Being outside of ontic beings) not only constituted the fundamental task of philosophy, but that it also provided the very condition for human existence: "[t]he

comprehension of Being [*l'être*] is the characteristic and fundamental fact of human existence."[71]

In the period following this 1932 publication however, Levinas began to develop a strong opposition to Heidegger's thought. Although several factors could be speculated to have contributed to his break, there can be little doubt that Heidegger's relationship to Nazism loomed large. In his 1963 autobiography, Levinas remarks that his life after the war was "dominated by the presentiment and the memory of the Nazi horror."[72] In a 1986 interview, Levinas said of Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi party: "I will never forget Heidegger's relation to Hitler. Even if this relation was only of a very short duration, it will be forever."[73]

As a Jewish officer in the French army, Levinas was held as prisoner of war between the years 1940 and 1945, and along with the lives of over 6 million people, the Nazi terror was responsible for taking the lives of Levinas' mother and father, and of his two younger brothers. Levinas would eventually dedicate his second major work in philosophy (*Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*) to "the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism."[74]

Whatever the motivation for breaking away from Heidegger, in subsequent texts following the second world war Levinas' reading nevertheless adopted an *ethical* slant. In various works, his theoretical conviction is that Heideggerian ontology is in large part "ethically indifferent" (*PII* 53), because, as he maintained, the anonymity

and impersonality of Being denied the primacy of the concrete relation with a human other.

This conviction that Being is anonymous and impersonal can be seen as early as his 1947 text, *Existence and Existents*. In this self-described "preparatory" (*EE* 16) text, Levinas makes it clear that although his thought is still indebted to Heidegger's advances, his current text feels the need to depart from the "climate" of his thinking:

> "If at the beginning our reflections are in large measure inspired by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, where we find the concept of ontology and of the relationship which man sustains with Being, they are also governed by a profound need to leave the climate of that philosophy" (*EE* 19)

Here Levinas plainly states that although still "inspired" by Heidegger's philosophy (as he was in 1930), his thinking now feels the need to move away from the status of Heidegger's general position. At a brief gloss, in this "preparatory" text, Levinas still follows Heidegger by attempting to think Being [*être*] without resorting to notions commonly used in the history of Western philosophy, e.g. as a concept, category, or substance (*EE* 18). However unlike Heidegger, who approaches the truth of Being in terms of a reflection on beings, Levinas attempts a kind of reversal, describing, instead, the way of truth as a movement from *existence* (Being) to *l'existant* (beings).[75] Furthermore, unlike any sort of a display of "affection for Heideggerian Being,"[76] Levinas *seems to*[77] describe the experience of Being in general with "horror" (*EE* 61). Echoing (at least in translation) Heidegger's *es gibt*, Levinas terms the thought and experience of undifferentiated Being the 'there is' [*il y a*]. He says:

> "*There is* in general, without mattering what there is, without our being able to fix a substantive to this term. *There is*: impersonal form, like 'it is raining' or 'it is warm'" (*EE* 58)

According to Levinas' phenomenological description of the *il y a*, the depersonalized experience of the *il y a*'s indeterminacy and the impossibility of its escape leads not to the horror of death and nothingness, but rather to the horror of its irremissibility (*EE* 61). On this account, human existence in the world is not to be thought of as a Heideggerian "throwness," but rather as the possibility of extracting oneself from the unsubstantive anonymity of the *il y a*,[78] i.e. to purge oneself *away from* the unfamiliarity of what has no determinate name.

Beyond these "preparatory" developments in *Existence and Existents*, Levinas would further sharpen his critique of the im-person-ality of Heideggerian Being in the 1951 essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?". As the title indicates, his essay challenges the priority of what Levinas terms 'ontology': "the knowledge of beings in general" (*OF* 2). His claim throughout is that the Western philosophical tradition too narrowly conceives its ultimate task. He suggests instead, that philosophy ought to exceed its habit of falling solely within the boundaries of "*compréhension.*" Notably, although he once valorized (1932) Heidegger for breaking away from Western philosophy, now, with respect to the task of "the knowledge of beings in general," Levinas situates Heidegger squarely within the framework of this tradition. He claims:

> "Comprehension, in Heidegger, rejoins the great tradition of Western philosophy: to comprehend the particular being is already to place oneself beyond the particular. To comprehend is to be related to the particular that only exists through knowledge, which is always knowledge of the universal" (*OF* 5)

This critique of the priority of "ontological comprehension" in the history of Western philosophy would remain a constant point of focus throughout Levinas' entire career. His difficulty with ontological comprehension rests in the conviction that to approach particular beings with the intent to *com-pris* is to never "relate" to the particular as such, but is only to understand the particular in terms of a universal. He situates Heidegger within this tradition by arguing that Heidegger's emphasis upon the interpretive context within which beings first come to stand already subordinates particular beings to a more general principle. Speaking directly of Heidegger's position, he states this view as follows:

> "[t]he understanding of a being [*l'étant*] will thus consist in going beyond that being [*l'étant*] into the *openness* and in perceiving it *upon the horizon of Being* [*l'être*]" (*OF* 5)

On Levinas' account, Heideggerian ontology reduces the particularity of a being since the particularity of a being is always understood with reference to the interpretive openness of an open region of beings, i.e. a particular being "is" a being only with recourse to the context (Being) within which a being can emerge.

This interpretation and critique of Heidegger's position is central to Levinas' basic disagreement with Heidegger, and it is developed in much more detail in the later essay "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" and in his first major text *Totality and Infinity*. However, in order to appreciate *why* this is a problematic for Levinas, it is necessary to understand what Levinas takes to be more basic than 'ontological comprehension.'

In the essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?," Levinas asks whether or not there might be another way (outside of comprehension) by which to relate to particulars: "can the *relation* with *being* be, at the beginning, anything other than its *comprehension* as being?" (*BW* 6). He immediately responds to *his* question as follows:

> "Unless it is the Other [*Sauf pour Autrui*]. Our relation with the other certainly consists in wanting to comprehend him, [sic.] but this relation overflows comprehension. Not only because knowledge of the other requires, outside of all curiosity, also sympathy and love, ways of being distinct from impassible contemplation, but because in our relation with the other, he does not affect us in terms of a concept. He is a being [*étant*] and counts as such" (*OF* 6)

Here Levinas introduces the relationship to the 'human Other' [*Autrui*][79] in order to contest the priority of ontological comprehension. Although he still appears to borrow from the language of ontology,[80] his introduction of the significance of the human Other prefigures the path of his more mature thought. His claim against Heidegger and the tradition is that the "relation" with a human other is more fundamental than all possible modes of epistemological assimilation. Speaking specifically contra Heidegger, Levinas points out the extra-ordinary dimension of the *Autrui*:

> "When I have grasped the Other [*Autrui*] in the opening of Being [*être*] in general, as an element of the world where I stand, where I have seen him *on the horizon*, I have not looked at him in the face [*visage*], I have not encountered his face [*visage*]" (*OF* 9)

Levinas is claiming that *if*, as in Heidegger's thought, a human Other is ultimately understood with reference to a standing in the interpretive openness of what can be seen (i.e. in terms of their "history, surroundings, and habits" (*OF* 9)), *then* philosophy has not taken into account the significance of the 'face of the Other' [*visage d'autrui*].

His argument, very generally at this stage, is that the face of the Other has an 'ethical meaning' [*signification éthique*], and that the centrality of this *meaning* for lived experience calls into question the primacy of ontological comprehension for philosophical thought.

In the essay "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" and the book *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas continues to develop his account of the 'face' [*visage*] in order to contest both Heidegger and the dominant tendencies in Western philosophy.[81] Before outlining the specifics of his critique of Heidegger, it is worth highlighting several significant points from these two texts.

He begins "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" by distinguishing two ways in which philosophy has searched for *truth* (*PII* 53). In the first way, truth implies a reality that is 'outside' the constitution of the seeker's nature. That is, it implies a "genuine experience" that "transports us *beyond* what constitutes our nature" (*PII* 53). Truth conceived in this sense designates the distance of an 'absolute' exteriority, and since its distance lies beyond the nature that surrounds us, Levinas terms this way of truth *meta-physical*. In contrast, he claims that a second sense of truth can "also mean the free adherence to a proposition" (*PII* 53). In this sense, no possible exteriority could disrupt the identity of the seeker, since, on approach, the subject has decided in advance that his or her identity should serve as the legitimated standard. On this second account of truth, then, otherness is understood in terms of the seeker's preserved identity, and can therefore be termed the *freedom of ego-logy*.[82]

To further develop his distinction between these two 'ways' [*voies*] of truth, Levinas introduces the dyad 'Same' [*Même*] and 'Other' [*Autrui / Autre*].[83] He claims that while the *meta-physical* direction maintains a genuine distance between Same and Other, the *freedom of the ego-logical* path attempts to "reduce every Other to the Same" (*PII* 54). By 'Same,' Levinas means *both* the self-identity of "man's ego" (*PII* 48 [sic.]) *and* the objects it can comprehend. His position is that within the *ego-logical* way of truth, whether the search has been realist or idealist, it already assumes an *a priori* "fit" between consciousness and whatever it seeks, to the point that nothing genuinely Other could ever resist its grasp.[84] Nothing could seemingly oppose the *freedom of the ego-logical* movement, because a correspondence between mind and world is already taken to be the ultimate locus for truth. In this way, on Levinas' account, unlike the *meta-physical* view of truth, *ego-logy* only encounters its own anticipatory hold.

In *Totality and Infinity*, this reduction of the Other to the Same serves to characterize the basic activity of what Levinas is attempting to contest. He describes the reduction as follows:

> "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being" (*TI* 43)

On Levinas' account, if the comprehension of beings in general (ego-logical ontology) is taken to be the ultimate locus of truth, then this predetermines that alterity is to be interpreted in terms of the "mediating device" (i.e. epistemological criterion, e.g. reason, sensation, Being, etc.) of the comprehending being; the Other is

understood in terms of the Same. Moreover, this means that nothing can limit the Same in its conquest of otherness. That is, nothing can call the Same into question.

At this juncture however, the pivotal question Levinas asks is: whether or not this is the way in which we experience the *human* encounter:

> "But if things do not resist the ruses of thought, and confirm the philosophy of the same, without ever putting into question the freedom of the I, is this also true of men? [sic.] Are they given to me as the things are? Do they not put into question my freedom?" (*PII* 50)

In order to contest the priority of the ontological comprehension of the Same, Levinas *asks this question* concerning the encounter with a human other. To further support his contestation, he appeals to the *ethical dimension* of this experience:

> "Freedom is put into question by the Other [*Autrui*], and is revealed to be unjustified, only when it knows itself to be unjust. Its knowing itself to be unjust is not something added on to spontaneous and free consciousness, which would be present to itself and know itself to be, *in addition*, guilty. A new situation is created; consciousness' presence to itself acquires a different modality; its positions collapse. To put it just in formal terms, the same does not find again its priority over the other, it does not rest peaceably on itself, is no longer the principle" (*PII* 50-51)

Levinas is here reflecting on the very possibility of the moral conscience of a free ego. He is arguing, in "formal terms," that something extra-ordinary occurs in the ego's encounter with a 'human Other' [*Autrui*]. This extra-ordinary "situation" he terms: the *calling into question* of the freedom and power of the Same. He is claiming above that in the encounter with an Other the freedom of an ego will discover itself to be accountable, but that the ultimate origin of this responsibility does not rest *within* the powers of the ego; instead, the command issues forth from 'outside' the freedom and power of the Same. As a result, Levinas argues that this commanding 'outside'

not only implies that all Otherness cannot be reduced to the Same, but that Otherness is also prior with respect to the Same. Meaning then, on Levinas' own schema, since the Other can suspend the pursuit of the Same, *truth* cannot ultimately rest upon the *freedom of ego-logy*; rather, *truth* must give way to a *meta-physical* conception of alterity.

To properly "deformalize"[85] this relation between Same and Other, Levinas further explains what he means by the encounter with a human Other. He once again points to the forthright immediacy of an Other's 'face' [*visage*]:

> "To be sure, the Other is exposed to all my powers, succumbs to all my ruses, all my crimes. Or he resists me with all his force and all the unpredictable resources of his own freedom. I measure myself against him. But he can also – and here is where he presents me his face [*visage*] – oppose himself to me beyond all measure, with the total uncoveredness and nakedness of his defenseless eyes, the straightforwardness, the absolute frankness of his gaze" (*PII* 55)

'*Visage*' is the term Levinas gives to the *unmediated directness* of the Other's presence. He makes this same appeal in *Totality and Infinity*:

> "The way in which the Other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face [*visage*]. This mode does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading itself forth as a set of qualities forming an image. The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its ideatum – the adequate idea. It does not manifest itself by these qualities, but *kath auto*. It *expresses itself*. The face brings a notion of truth" (*TI* 50-51)

As Levinas emphasizes, since the sensible qualities of an empirical face exposes the Other to the comprehending grasp of the Same, the significance of the 'face' is not to be understood in terms of such sensible qualities.[86] Moreover, the ultimate meaning of the 'face' cannot be appreciated from some third party perspective that observes the

face-to-face encounter; such a perspective still reduces the Other to the Same, because it mediates the relation by treating the encounter as two equal parts capable of being subsumed into a larger whole. Against such conceptions of the 'face,' Levinas claims that the *visage* is an unmediated "epiphany" (*PII* 55) whose explosive power (i.e. the ability to call into question the primacy of the Same) can only occur *within the straightforwardness of the relation*. That is, only from *within the relation* can the face of the Other interrupt the epistemological efforts of the Same. The encounter with the face of an Other initiates this interruption, because no possible form of epistemological mediation could wholly span the distance separating the Same from the human Other. The distance cannot be fully overcome, he claims, because *within the immediacy of the encounter* something *beyond* the powers of comprehension emerges. That is, the face of the Other evidences a *meaning* that endlessly surpasses and overflows the capacity to mediate the radical difference between Same and Other.

In this way, relying not on logical deduction but rather on what one commentator has aptly termed "the phenomenological recognition of the reader,"[87] Levinas argues that *within* the proximity of the face-to-face relation the priority of the Same with respect to the Other is called into question. Levinas further terms this calling into question "ethical." He does so not because it names a doctrine of moral principles, norms, or a code of conduct, but rather because it identifies the *original source* for the derivation of such doctrines or rules for individual and social action. That is, the calling into question is termed "ethical," because it not only names *why* human societies ultimately ask such questions as to *how* one ought to treat one

another, but because it also attempts to identify the basic "situation" that makes such questions an issue in the first place.

Understood in this sense, since "ethics" names a primordial dimension that precedes all possible forms of epistemological comprehension, Levinas' overall project is appropriately termed an "Ethics as First Philosophy."[88] On Levinas' view, since, in the gaze of the Other "a new situation is created" (*PII* 50), prior to reason, history, culture, Being, etc., an "ethical relation" ultimately governs all possible forms of human action, i.e. the *visage* originally "directs" the way in which human societies primarily interact. *Truth* then, on his account, is fundamentally the *meta-physical* alterity of the human Other (as opposed to the *ego-logy* of the Same) because the radical distance separating the human Other from the Same indicates the most basic phenomenon that underlies lived experience.

So how does Levinas' *ethical project* relate to Heideggerian ontology? Levinas' basic claim is that far from 'destroying' [*Destruktion*] and overcoming the Western tradition, Heidegger instead "sums up a whole current" (*PII* 51) of prioritizing the Same with respect to the Other. As seen above, even though Heidegger does not think Being in terms of a correspondence between mind and world, and even though Heidegger does not name Being as a genus or a universal, Levinas argues that Heidegger's emphasis upon the emergent process within which beings are ultimately revealed is still a form of reducing the Other to the similarity of the Same (*ego-logy*). Levinas states his position as follows:

> "The supremacy of the same over the other seems to be integrally maintained in the philosophy of Heidegger, the most renowned of our

> time. When Heidegger traces the way of access to each real singularity through Being, which is not a particular being nor a genus in which all particulars would enter, but is rather the very act of being which the verb to be, and not the substantive, expresses…he leads us to the singularity across a neuter [*neutre*] which illuminates and commands thought, and renders intelligible" (*PII* 51)

Levinas' criticism is that Heideggerian Being effectively functions as a neutralizing device for mediating relations between the Same and the Other. It does so, according to Levinas, since Heidegger's appeal to the interpretive openness (horizon of Being) through which beings can emerge already subordinates the relationship with a particular Other. As a result, Levinas claims that Heideggerian ontology dominates the *inter-personal* relation between Same and Other:

> "[t]o affirm the priority of *Being* over *existents* is to already decide the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is an existent, (the ethical relation) to a relation with the *Being of existents* (a relationship of knowing), [it] subordinates justice to freedom" (*TI* 45)

Levinas is claiming that Heidegger's appeal to the priority of Being entails that relations of human proximity must be mediated in and through the *horizonal openness* of Being. On Levinas' view however, *if* social interaction is ultimately understood in terms of a governing framework of interpretive possibilities, *then* the originary *ethical meaning* of the face of the Other is suppressed. As a result, Levinas believes Heidegger's position has the following effect:

> "In subordinating every relation with existents to the relation with Being the Heideggerian ontology affirms the priority of freedom over ethics" (*TI* 45)

Even though, as we saw above, Heidegger understands freedom in the distinctive sense of an *obedience* to the interpretive possibilities in the openness of an

open region ("letting beings be"), Levinas maintains that the Heideggerian difference between Being and beings still has the effect of promoting the *freedom of ego-logy* over against the irreducibility of a *meta-physical* account of truth. It has this effect, Levinas claims, because 'freedom' understood as an obedience to interpretive openness ultimately understands the original source of obligation in terms *other than* the human Other, viz. in terms of the meaning of Being. That is, what originally motivates action is not, as in Levinas, the face of an Other, but rather an engagement with the interpretive possibilities in a context of meaning. As such, on Levinas' account, since freedom according to Heidegger overlooks the extra-ordinary ethical meaning of the inter-personal relation, it can only presuppose the primacy of the Same:

> "[t]o be sure, the freedom involved in the essence of truth is not for Heidegger a principle of free will. Freedom comes from an obedience to Being: it is not man who possesses freedom; it is freedom that possesses man. But the dialectic which thus reconciles freedom and obedience in the concept of truth presupposes the primacy of the same" (*TI* 45)

Heideggerian obedience to Being presupposes the priority of the Same, because the interpersonal relation with the Other is treated as a 'being' [*étant*] that is always already interpreted in terms of the horizon of Being, and therefore denies in advance any possible 'overflow' of *meaning* that the gaze of the Other could disrupt:

> "Heideggerian ontology subordinates the relation with the other to the relation with the neuter, Being, and it thus continues to exalt the will to power, whose legitimacy the Other alone can unsettle...Anonymous, neuter, [Being] directs [existing], ethically indifferent, as a heroic freedom, foreign to all guilt with regard to the other" (*PII* 52-53)

On Levinas' account then, to be with the Other in terms of Heideggerian Being is to never be with the Other as such, because it is to be with the Other in terms of an anonymous "neuter" that is "ethically indifferent" to the straightforward immediacy of *inter-personal* relations. As a result, according to Levinas' general critique, since Heidegger suppresses the primacy of the *ethical meaning* that obtains within human proximity, he believes Heideggerian ontology ultimately reduces every Other to the Same, i.e. by appealing to the interpretive opening of Being, Heidegger promotes the *freedom of ego-logy* over a *meta-physical* conception of truth.

In summary, although both thinkers deny the primacy of a straightaway correspondence theory of truth, Levinas' disagreement with Heidegger rests in his conviction that Heidegger's affirmation of Being denies the radical irreducibility fundamental to inter-personal relations. His claim, in short, is that the Heideggerian 'difference' [*Differenz*] dominates the relation with an Other in terms of the "neutral anonymity" of Being, and therefore implies an ethical indifference. It is "ethically indifferent" (*CPP* 53), because it promotes freedom (interpretive engagement with the openness) over the originary obligation that obtains within the straightforwardness of face-to-face relations. On Levinas' account then, the Heideggerian focus upon Being permits all kinds of violence and cruelty (*PII* 52), because, in denying the primacy of the ethical relation with the Other, Heideggerian ontology takes the origin of action to be conditioned by the openness of the interpretive horizon of Being. As such, since Heidegger's difference between Being and beings can only understand the relationship with an Other in terms of an interpretive engagement with the openness of the

interpretive horizon, Levinas claims that Heidegger suppresses an *ethical meaning* that ultimately governs lived experience – the irreducibility of the face of an Other.

Levinas' Plato

As already mentioned, unlike Heidegger, Levinas did not devote an essay to Plato's thought. Nevertheless, in the course of his endeavor to develop an original line of thinking contra Heidegger, Levinas did reference Plato quite frequently. The following list names a few of these interspersed appeals:

-In the Preface to *Existence and Existents* Levinas says:

> "[t]he Platonic formula that situates the Good beyond Being serves as the general guideline for this research" (*EE* 15);

-In "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," while speaking of the tradition that *does not* attempt to reduce every Other to the Same, Levinas states:

> "Plato stands in this tradition when he situates the good above Being, and, in the Phaedrus, defines true discourse as a discourse with gods" (*PII* 53);

-And in the *Resumé* to *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas concludes by describing the overall effort of his book as an attempt to:

> "[r]eturn to Platonism [*retrouver le platonisme*]."[89]

Adriaan Peperzak has speculated that the relative unfamiliarity with this last quote might help to explain why there is an overwhelming inattention to the significance of Levinas' 'Platonism' in the secondary literature.[90] In this section, I will attempt to delineate three central features that, taken together, allow us to approach Levinas' 'retrieval' [*retrouver*] of Platonism. I will term these three Platonic

appropriations as: i) a structure of primordial transcendence, ii) the significance of other persons, and iii) a concern for justice.

Although the phrase "return to Platonism" might suggest otherwise, Levinas' attraction to Plato is not altogether uncritical. Before delineating these three central Platonic motifs, it is worthwhile to briefly expound two points at which Levinas criticizes Plato. The first criticism concerns the well-known[91] Platonic question concerning the common (*koinon*). This question asks, as Levinas puts it: "the *what* is it?" (*TI* 65). According to Levinas, when one inquires into the *whatness* of a thing, the *what* that in general constitutes "*this* as *that*" ["*ceci* en tant que *cela*"] (*TI* 65), one performs a reduction of Otherness to the Same. That is, to reflect upon the common essential feature that determines any particular thing as the thing that it is, is to neutralize a particular Other according to a universal.

Levinas names Plato as a figure who reduces particularity to a universal in the essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?":

> "From the moment that one engages in reflection and precisely for the very reasons which, since Plato, subject the sensation of the particular to knowledge of the universal, one is forced, it would seem, to subject relations between beings to structures of being" (*OF* 5)

According to Levinas, the Platonic question concerning the *common essence* of a being decides in advance that the most important of realities is arrived at through the synthesizing powers of ontological comprehension. Since Plato's dialogues do ask this question, and since the answer most often given is in terms of the universal *idea* / *eidos*, such an eidetic vision means that, according to Levinas' Plato, the relationship with the face of the Other is "inconceivable without the Ideas" (*TI* 71). As such, since

the eidetic quest mediates the relation with an Other by comprehending the Other in terms of an *eidos*, Levinas criticizes the Platonic question concerning the common (*koinon*) for interpreting, in advance, Otherness in terms of the Same.[92]

Levinas second critique concerns Plato's well-known response to the so-called Meno paradox,[93] i.e. Plato's account of knowledge as a form of recollection (*anamnesis*). Briefly stated, according to a number of Plato's dialogues,[94] since both scientific and philosophical inquiry already presupposes a familiarity with what is sought, genuine knowledge must consist of a form of recollection or remembrance.

On Levinas' view, Plato's account of knowledge as *anamnesis* is another form of reducing the Other to the Same.[95] Plato's account performs this reduction, because it maintains that the truth of an exterior Other can only be understood with reference to the interiority of what the self always already knows. In this way, knowledge as recollection (*anamnesis*) thematizes the Other in advance; its emphasis upon *remembering* the realm of immutable *eide* suppresses the extra-ordinary alterity of the human Other. Levinas explicitly states this view in "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" when he says:

> "[I]ndependence – autarchy – came to the Platonic soul (and to all its counterfeit versions) from its homeland, the world of Ideas; according to the *Phaedo*, the soul is related to that world, and consequently cannot encounter anything really foreign to it" (*PII* 51)

The Platonic soul cannot encounter anything "foreign," because the relation with alterity is forever mediated by the sameness of an internal memory. As such, since Plato's account of recollection mediates the relation with an Other, Levinas criticizes Plato for reducing the Other to the Same.

Despite these two criticisms, however, *in these same works* Levinas also adopts and appropriates certain Platonic motifs in a positive fashion.

i) primordial transcendence

Levinas' most widely discussed[96] reference to Plato is his appeal to the enigmatic Platonic formulation: "the Good Beyond Being." The significance of this appeal is suggested by its recurrence throughout his oeuvre: it is made in numerous texts, and even forms the title of his second major work.[97]

Commentators often point out that Plato's expression from 509b of the *Republic* was treated as a rather obscure and mysterious formulation in ancient times.[98] It was treated as such, because Socrates appears to suggest something rather bizarre: he says, in one very brief sentence, that although the Good (*agathon*) establishes the intelligibility of all possible *eide* and being, the Good itself is not *within being*. Instead, strangely, the Good is said to be "*beyond* being (*epekeina tes ousias*) exceeding it in dignity and power" (*R* 509b).

The brevity of this remark renders it all the more enigmatic, and several questions immediately arise. The first and foremost concern is: how does some-*thing* that is the source of all being and intelligibility not belong to what *is*? In other words, how can something that is not itself a being, nor within being, 'be' something that grounds the appearing and understanding of beings. Furthermore, considering the fact that Plato's *Sophist* named each of the five basic 'genera' (motion, rest, same, other, being) all within the scope of the "highest genus"[99] 'being' (*ousias*), it becomes very difficult to understand why Plato seems to introduce a further category named the

'beyond being' in the *Republic*, and moreover, that he introduces it in such an exceptional fashion, i.e. as the *source* of all being and intelligibility.

Since Levinas does not concern himself with interpreting the role of 509b within Plato's *oeuvre*, and since, instead, Levinas' project claims to encounter this passage *personally*: "we thus encounter, in our own way, the Platonic idea of the Good beyond Being" (*TI* 293), it is not necessary, for my purposes, to speculate what Plato precisely intended by 509b of the *Republic*. Instead, I will discuss the way in which "the Good Beyond Being" functions in Levinas' thought.

I submit that the reason for Levinas' attraction to "the Good Beyond Being" lies in the fact that it can designate, *in the language of philosophy*, a primordial structure of transcendence that is capable of expressing the radical distance between the Same and the Other.

Levinas believes that *within* the immediacy of the face-to-face relation there is an irreducible distance between the Same and the Other, such that no possible epistemological effort on the part of the Same could every fully encompass the basic reality of the Other. However, if the distance between the Same and the Other is, in fact, unbridgeable, this would seem to problematize the status of Levinas' own project since there would appear to be no philosophical means for expressing this separation.

I believe this consequence is Levinas' leading motivation for appealing to the Platonic formula the 'Good beyond being.' This formulation enables Levinas to express, in philosophical terms, the structure of a radical distance separating the Same and the Other. As a result, since he can approach the meaning of this radical

separation within the language of the occidental philosophical tradition, Levinas can legitimize his own project as "philosophical" (*PII* 53), i.e. his emphasis upon the ineffability of the Other does not have to draw from a terminology that falls wholly *outside* philosophical consciousness (e.g. as religious, mystical, poetic, etc.).

That Levinas' appeal to the Platonic "beyond Being" is largely motivated by a desire to legitimate his project in philosophical terms is supported by his contention in *Totality and Infinity* that the "Good beyond being" is a quintessentially *Western* concept grounded in the history of *Western* philosophy. He states this point in two places:

> "If the [beyond being] has played no role in the Western tradition issued from Aristotle, the Platonic idea of the Good ensures it the dignity of a philosophical thought – and it therefore should not be traced back to any oriental wisdom" (*TI* 218), and
>
> "Greek metaphysics conceived the Good as separate from the totality of essences, and in this way (without any contribution from an alleged Oriental thought) it caught sight of a structure such that the totality could admit of a beyond" (*TI* 102)

In both places, Levinas points out that the place of the Good above and beyond (*epekeina*) the totality of beings and essences (*ousias*) is *Western* in its foundation. Levinas should not, of course, be interpreted as claiming that Plato understood the radical alterity of the face of an Other; rather, he is suggesting that the meaningful structure of an *extra-ordinary distance* (transcendence) is not unfamiliar to the language and appreciation of Western philosophy – it is in fact already at play near its origins. Since Plato seems to recognize that there is an 'outside' to being and essence,

Levinas wants to emphasize that Greek philosophy issuing from Plato is not necessarily *ego-logical*; it already admits of a *meta-physical* structure.

Moreover, Levinas stresses that this seemingly paradoxical structure of transcendence in Plato's thought should not be taken as a mere marginal comment. Although brief and enigmatic, Levinas points out that the Good was also named by Socrates the *primordial source* of all being and understanding: "Plato nowise deduces being from the Good: he posits transcendence as surpassing the totality" (*TI* 103). Foremost and fundamental to Plato, Levinas claims, is the transcendence of the Good with respect to all possible forms of eidetic vision (knowledge of essences). In other words, on Levinas' view of Plato, the Good is not only separate from the totality of knowable objects, but it in fact *precedes* and *grounds* the possibility of all forms of ontological comprehension.

Such an account of *primordial transcendence* in Plato leads Levinas to make the following pronouncement:

> "The Place of the Good above every essence is the most profound teaching, the definitive teaching, not of theology, but of philosophy" (*TI* 103)

Once again appealing to the status of this expression within the language of philosophy, Levinas points to the instruction of this Platonic phrase. The phrase identifies, according to Levinas, that what is most basic for thought to encounter is not an issue of knowledge. Rather, prior to an insight into knowable essences, Plato's view of the Good voices the teaching that what is first and foremost for speculative thought is an originary transcendence that identifies radical alterity.

By emphasizing this enigmatic dimension that Plato names the *original source* of all that is intelligible, Levinas is attempting to appropriate the view that speculative thinking about what is most fundamental can be *philosophically meaningful* even if it might escape the powers of comprehension. Since Levinas must maintain the radical ineffability of the Other, his strategy is to appeal to certain instances of fundamental distance that are already familiar to philosophical discourse in the Western tradition.[100] Drawing from Plato's structure of a *primordial transcendence*, Levinas wants to highlight the view that although what is most basic ("face") for thought to encounter may resist eidetic comprehension, this consequence does not entail that its epistemological resistance is ultimately non-sensical. Plato's expression the 'Good Beyond Being' names, in the language of philosophy, a *meta-physical* structure of radical difference.

ii) the significance of other persons

Although Levinas' appeal to the 'Good Beyond Being' is the most recognized of his various references to Plato, I believe there are two further aspects of his 'rediscovery' that are worth highlighting.

The first aspect is Levinas' appeal to the significance Plato attaches to the presence of other persons. As Peperzak notes, Levinas seems to suggest that Plato may "have had a sense of the impossibility of capturing the other through categories."[101] Although Levinas observes that the "absolute experience in the face to face" would be, for Plato, "inconceivable without the interposition of the Ideas" (*TI* 71), Levinas further points out that Plato saw 'thought' [*pensée*] as an exchange

between interlocutors who were not equal elements within a synthetic whole. Rather, on Levinas' reading of Plato, thinking about the true and the real ultimately proceeds from the presence of first person speakers. He says:

> "Thought [*pensée*], for Plato, is not reducible to an impersonal concatenation of true relations, but implies persons and interpersonal relations" (*TI* 71)

Levinas supports his reading by emphasizing the *Phaedrus'* distinction between the written and the spoken word. As I highlighted in chapter 1 of my thesis, Socrates argues in this dialogue that since the written *logos* lies open and exposed (unable to answer for itself when questioned) the spoken *logos* has the advantage of responding and speaking in defense of itself. As Phaedrus says, the spoken *logos* is the "living, breathing discourse" that can support the ultimate meaning of the speech meant to be expressed.

Levinas claims that Plato's distinction between the written *logos* ("that which doubtlessly is established in writings, impersonally" (*TI* 73)) and the spoken *logos*, shares a certain rapport with his own account of the expressive meaning of the face of an Other. It does so, because Plato's account also stresses the significant presence of an other person in order to deliver a fundamental meaning. While describing the expression of the face, Levinas says:

> "In a face the expressed *attends* its expression, expresses its very expression, always remains master of the meaning it delivers. A 'pure act' in its own way, it resists identification, does not enter into the already known, brings aid to itself, as Plato puts it, speaks" (*PII* 53)

As in Plato's distinction between the written and spoken *logos*, the ultimate meaning of an expression does not consist of the impersonality of a solitary reflection. Rather,

as Levinas emphasizes, the fundamental significance of *logos* must always trace back to the inter-personality of a social relation (*TI* 72). For it is in and through the inter-personal relation, Levinas maintains (while drawing from Plato), that *thinking* about what is most fundamental first gains its significance. That is, rather than an "ontological reflection" upon symbols or signs, *thinking* about truth and reality is ultimately made possible by a social relation amongst first person speakers.

What Levinas incorporates from Plato then, is the significance Plato seems to attach to first person encounters. Similar to his own view concerning the face of an Other, Levinas believes that Plato recognized the importance of others for the delivery of an ultimate expression. By emphasizing the *Phaedrus'* distinction between the written and spoken *logos*, Levinas appears to 're-discover' a Platonic insight concerning the significance of other persons for philosophical thought.

iii) the concern for justice

Since Plato attaches an importance to the role of other persons, Levinas further believes that Platonic thinking can be seen to involve a certain concern for justice. To support this reading, Levinas emphasizes the fact that within the Platonic dialogues the pursuit for truth is intricately tied to a social relation. He offers two reasons for thinking that Plato maintained this union and that this union implies an originary motivation for justice.

First, Levinas stresses that genuine philosophical exchange amongst interlocutors in the dialogues often does not occur amongst equals. Instead, speaking specifically of the *Phaedrus*, Levinas points out that "true discourse" for Plato

appears as a "conversation with a god who is master" (*TI* 71-72). Drawing further from passages in the *Theatetus* and the *Phaedo*, Levinas highlights Plato's conviction that the search for the true first occurs within a social relation amongst unequals. Levinas' point is to accent the issue that the occasioning of thought and wisdom *arises from* the requisite difference of the interlocutor. That is, it is only in terms of the Other's otherness that that thought can awaken for education. Speaking of Plato's dialogical presentation, Levinas says:

> "Community through the interposition of the ideas does not establish pure and simple equality among the interlocutors…The interlocutors are not equals; when it has reached truth discourse is conversation with a god who is not our "fellow servant" [*Phaedrus* 273e]. Society does not proceed from the contemplation of the true; truth is made possible by relation with the Other our master. Truth is thus bound to the social relation, which is justice" (*TI* 71-72)

In his reading of Plato here, Levinas' emphasis is to highlight his own view that the origin of philosophical thinking is neither solitary nor amongst equals. Rather, the desire for truth is first tied to a relation with an Other who holds a privilege with respect to the thinker who meets him or her. That is, philosophical consciousness *arises from* an awareness of the Other's right. With respect to Plato, Levinas suggests that the dialogues share in this view since they appear to presuppose an inequality amongst the respective seekers of truth. His reading of Plato highlights the fact that, within the dialogues, the incitation of *thought* does not occur without the requisite sociality of a communal relation of unequals.

A second attempt to incorporate a Platonic concern for justice can be seen in an interview from 1987. In this interview, Levinas once again names Plato while

presenting his position that *thought* originally proceeds from a moral concern. Speaking of his overall project he says:

> "I have ventured to write that the very search for objectivity emerges in the ethical conflict, the acuity of which is assuaged by justice…[this] repeats, as in Plato, that it is not that consciousness founds the Good but that the Good calls to consciousness"[102]

The philosophical concern for truth, on Levinas' account, does not occur without a prior social relation with an Other. The Other, as origin of thought and action, commands and directs consciousness. Plato's *agathon* then, clearly appropriated in a moral sense by Levinas, does not stand as an epistemological concept to be posited for intentional assimilation. Rather, Levinas believes that the moral Good calls intentionality forth. With respect to Plato, Levinas in fact highlights this view by identifying the following passage from the *Republic*: "every soul pursues the Good and does whatever it does for its sake" (*R* 505e). On Levinas' account, as in Plato, philosophical consciousness does not posit the Good, the Good orders consciousness. That is, understood in a moral sense, the supremacy of Plato's *agathon* is not constituted by the philosophical mind, instead, philosophical consciousness originates because of the authority of the Good. Levinas believes he shares with Plato the insight that a concern for justice ultimately motivates philosophical thought.

On Levinas' reading, since the genuine exchange of ideas in Plato's dialogues often presuppose an inequality amongst interlocutors, and since the preeminence of Plato's *agathon* (interpreted in a moral sense) is said to be the ultimate impetus for thought and action, *justice* appears to motivate philosophical thought in the Platonic dialogues. Justice appears as a source of inspiration for Plato, Levinas suggests,

because within the dialogues the pursuit for truth inextricably arises from a social relation. That is, philosophical consciousness is not occasioned by a solitary reflection that is undisturbed by others. Rather, since philosophical motivation presupposes persons, and since true discourse only occurs when a dimension of privilege permeates the community, it is ultimately the Good that provokes thought. Since truth and sociality are in this way inextricably bound for Plato, Levinas believes that an affinity unites his ethical project with Plato's dialogues.

Conclusion

Levinas' overall position is appropriately termed an "Ethics as First Philosophy." Contra Heidegger and much of Western philosophy, Levinas believes that an ethical dimension, occasioned *within* the straightforward immediacy of the face-to-face relation both *precedes* and *governs* human thought and action. He presents this view by naming the forthrightness of the face the *calling into question* of the Same by the Other. According to Levinas, since the human Other resists the epistemological grasp of the Same (by evidencing a *meaning* that cannot be wholly comprehended), a *meta-physical* structure of absolute alterity must take precedence over the im-personal freedom of *ego-logical* pursuits.

His critique of Heidegger maintains that, since Heidegger emphasizes the interpretive openness within which particular beings come to stand, Heideggerian ontology affirms the *ego-logical* manner of reducing the Other to the Same. It does so, according to Levinas, since on Heidegger's account a human Other is understood in terms of the emergent interpretive context (Being) within which the Other is said to

appear. Levinas believes that Heidegger's position is in this way "ethically indifferent," because it suppresses a primordial *ethical meaning* that the concrete human Other evinces. Against Heidegger then, Levinas claims that human thought and action are not originally informed by an interpretive engagement with Being, but rather by the irreducibility of the face of an Other.

Levinas' appeal to 're-discover Platonism' was shown to consist of three central themes. By appropriating Plato's enigmatic phrase the 'Good Beyond Being,' I argued that Levinas wants to legitimate his ethical project in the language of philosophy. That is, he makes use of this phrase because it names a structure of *primordial transcendence*; it identifies that what is first and foremost for speculative thought can be philosophically meaningful even if it falls outside epistemological comprehension. Furthermore, by emphasizing the *Phaedrus'* promotion of the spoken *logos* over that of the written, Levinas also takes Plato to have recognized the *significance of others*. This prioritizing, Levinas believes, parallels his own account of the original meaning of the face's ultimate expression. And thirdly, by highlighting the ways in which truth and sociality are intricately bound together in Plato's dialogues, Levinas suggests, like his own ethical project, that Plato held *a concern for justice* to constitute the occasion for philosophical thought; philosophy does not establish the Good, the Good enables philosophy.

IV. Heidegger's Plato and Levinas' Plato

In this chapter, without presuming to adjudicate between their respective appropriations, I will juxtapose Levinas' various appeals to Plato with Heidegger's reading of Plato in his essay "Plato's Doctrine of Truth." What emerges from this juxtaposition, I submit, is that 'Plato' can be seen to function as an interpretive sign for rendering visible basic points of disagreement between Levinas and Heidegger. In other words, I believe a contrast in their respective incorporations of Plato in fact reflects those crucial points at which Levinas criticizes Heidegger. These three features involve: i) a concern for justice, ii) the significance of other persons, and iii) a structure of radical transcendence (*epekeina tes ousias*).

With due regard for the interpretive limitations I noted at the outset,[103] I believe the textual resources *are* available to not only set forth the contrast between Heidegger and Levinas on Plato, but to also do so in a way that is instructive. My manner of demonstrating this juxtaposition will consist of the following three steps: 1) I will highlight a point at which Levinas appeals to Plato, 2) I will observe whether or not this point is present in Heidegger's reading, and 3) I will then draw out any interpretive significance that this juxtaposition might have for exposing the differences between Heidegger and Levinas.

i) a concern for justice

As we saw above, Levinas holds that the various ways in which truth and sociality were interconnected in the Platonic dialogues evidences a certain motivation for justice. Although Levinas did not illustrate this point with reference to Plato's

cave allegory, he did site several other passages (including one from the *Republic* [505e])[104] that suggested Plato held a concern for justice to be a primary motivation for philosophical consciousness.

As a result, I would like to ask the following question: can such a concern for justice be observed in Heidegger's reading of Plato?

Since Heidegger nowhere mentions the issue of justice in his interpretation of Plato's cave allegory, it would appear as though he believes such an issue is not significant for an understanding of Plato's thought. Rather, his reading focuses instead upon Plato's determination of *alétheia* and the ways in which this 'transformation' [*Wandel*] in the essence of truth has led to the contemporary forgetting of the difference between Being and beings. That the basis of Heidegger's reading is, ultimately, focused upon this "change in the essence of truth" is most clearly signaled by the way in which he interprets the subject of 'education' (*paideia*). His reading points out that Plato presents the cave allegory in order to demonstrate the education necessary for the 'formation' [*Bildung*] of the philosophical rulers: "Plato's assertion is clear: the 'allegory of the cave' illustrates the essence of 'education'" (*PDT* 167). However he interprets the significance of Plato's theme (viz. the essence of *paideia*) in terms of its relationship to a transformation in the essence of truth: "the essence of truth and the sort of transformation it undergoes here first make possible 'education' in its basic structures" (*PDT* 167). That is, according to Heidegger, in order to understand what Plato means by the essence of education (and by implication,

the ultimate meaning of Plato's cave allegory), one must first recognize what is meant by Plato's determination of the essence of truth.

Quite clearly then, since Heidegger's reading focuses so centrally upon the essence of truth and Being, and since he is therefore silent with respect to the subject of justice, his interpretation suggests that, unlike in Levinas' reading, a basic motivation for justice is not significant for interpreting Plato's thought. While Levinas tries to 'rediscover' [*retrouver*] an ancient concern for justice, Heidegger's reading is focused upon a 'destruction' [*Destruktion*] of ancient ontology from the standpoint of overcoming the conceptual structures that have led to the forgetting of Being.

I believe this contrast reflects an aspect of Levinas' critique of Heidegger. Levinas claims that Heideggerian ontology unduly suppresses the issue of justice. Levinas criticizes Heidegger on this point because he believes Heideggerian ontology understands the ethical relation with an Other in terms of Being (interpretive openness) rather than in terms of the straightforward immediacy of the face of the Other. That is, due to Heidegger's assignment of fundamental status to Being, Levinas maintains that Heidegger overlooks a more original basis for justice.

Although Levinas does not offer a reading of the cave allegory on the subject of justice, I submit that based upon what we do know from his interpretation of Plato, in contrast to Heidegger, his position would highlight an original motivation for justice. Beyond his own suggestion that a concern for justice would seem to be implied since the pursuit of truth occurs within a social relation (Socrates and Glaucon), Levinas might even point out that the question of justice (*dike*) is raised at

the very outset of the *Republic* (*R* 331d). Perhaps then, from a Levinasian perspective, the matter of justice in Plato's cave allegory is not an issue about which one can be so easily silent.

On Heidegger's account however, what is significant about the cave allegory is a transformation in the essence of truth. Unlike Levinas', his reading of Plato does not attempt to highlight an original concern for justice; instead, Heidegger does not mention justice in his reading. Without deciding whether or not the issue of justice *is* in fact present in the cave allegory, it is clear that Heidegger and Levinas stand opposed on the issue of justice in their respective emphases in their reading of Plato.

I believe this juxtaposition in the reading of Plato exposes a central point of disagreement between Heidegger and Levinas. Levinas claims that Heideggerian ontology suppresses the issue of justice. In their differing readings of Plato, Levinas emphasizes a concern for justice while Heidegger's remains silent on this very point. Without having to adjudicate between their readings, I believe this juxtaposition parallels Levinas' critique that Heidegger's emphasis upon Being overshadows and overwhelms the issue concerning justice, i.e. in contrast to Levinas, Heidegger's reading suggests that any matter of justice is derivative upon truth and Being. In this way, Levinas' emphasis on a concern for justice in Plato juxtaposed with Heidegger's silence is an interpretive sign for rendering visible a basic point of disagreement between Heidegger and Levinas.

ii) the significance of other persons

A second point that Levinas appropriates in his reading of Plato is the way in which Plato awards a significant role to other persons. Drawing from the *Phaedrus'* prioritizing of the spoken *logos* over that of the written, and moreover emphasizing the dynamic social dimension pervading Plato's dialogues, Levinas stresses the view that Plato held the ultimate meaning of an expression to require the first person presence of an other.

In this context then, the question arises as to whether or not this feature of Plato's thought is present in Heidegger's interpretation of the cave allegory.

Aside from a reference to Socrates' death (*PDT* 171), the only mention of other persons in Heidegger's reading is his statement that the completely liberated person must take the prisoners away "from their unconcealedness" to guide them to "the most unconcealed" (*PDT* 171). However, when juxtaposed with Levinas' emphasis upon the significant role of other persons, the question arises, why is Heidegger's reading so quiet on this point? Why does Heidegger not mention the presence of other persons at the various other stages of the cave allegory, and furthermore, why does his reading, unlike Levinas', not draw any significance from this feature?

Even though Heidegger's reading puts enormous weight upon the several 'turnings' [*Umwendung*] within the cave allegory (each stage is a transition whereby the "gaze becomes more correct" (*PDT* 177)), rather than highlighting any significance from the role of human others, he interprets each 'turn' [*umwenden*] in terms of the 'confusion' [*Verwirrung*] that the eye's experience when they are

presented with new objects (*PDT* 165-166). As a result, his reading suggests that Plato understood the pursuit of truth as connected to an experience that could happen to an isolated individual.

Although Levinas does not offer an interpretation of the various stages of the cave allegory, I believe that once again we have the textual resources available to see how his reading differs from Heidegger's. On Levinas' reading of Plato, the pursuit of truth "implies persons and interpersonal relations" (*TI* 71). From a Levinasian perspective then, each stage of the cave allegory (from the darkness toward the light and then back down again) is not easily interpreted as a solitary journey. Instead, it would appear to fundamentally require the first person presence of an other person (a social dimension).

I believe this deviation in the reading of Plato brings out another basic point of disagreement between Heidegger and Levinas. If we recall, Levinas criticizes Heideggerian ontology for denying the primacy of inter-personal relations:

> "[T]o affirm the priority of *Being* over *existents* is to already decided the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is an existent, (the ethical relation) to a relation with the *Being of existents*, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents" (*TI* 45)

Levinas' claim is that since Heideggerian ontology ultimately understands inter-personal relations in terms of Being (interpretive context of meaning), Heidegger immediately suppresses the ethical meaning in the inter-personal relation. That is, on Levinas' account, the face of an Other can shatter the anticipatory grasp of the

interpretive possibilities in an open region, and therefore implies that the proximity of the social relation is more fundamental than Heideggerian Being.

This critique, I submit, is revealed in the different ways in which Heidegger and Levinas interpret the role of human otherness in Plato. Without deciding whether or not Plato actually awarded a decisive role to human otherness in the pursuit of truth, I believe we can use this deviation in readings to expose a basic point of disagreement.

Heidegger's effective silence contrasted with Levinas' emphasis parallels, I claim, Levinas' critique that Heideggerian ontology does not take into account the full significance of inter-personal relations. That is, contra Heidegger, Levinas states that philosophical consciousness is inseparable from the extra-ordinary dynamic of social relations; he criticizes Heideggerian ontology for overlooking this dimension. While Levinas deems this issue noteworthy in his reading of Plato, Heidegger's interpretation suggests that there is nothing philosophically important about the role of human otherness in the pursuit of truth. Once again then, their respective readings of Plato expose a central point of disagreement.

iii) a structure of radical transcendence

As I developed in chapter 3, Levinas' most frequent appeal to Plato concerns the enigmatic expression from 509b of the *Republic*: 'the Good Beyond Being.' Levinas believes that this phrase suggests Plato "caught sight of a structure such that the totality could admit of a beyond" (*TI* 102), which moreover meant that "[Plato] posits transcendence as surpassing the totality" (*TI* 103). On Levinas' reading then, Plato held that what was most fundamental for speculative thought to encounter

was not some knowable 'essence' (*ousias*); instead, 'beyond' (*epekeina*) such eidetic insight, Plato's expression implies the priority of an unthematizable radical transcendence.

For the purposes of my thesis, I believe it is worth asking whether or not Heidegger attempts to interpret this expression in his reading of Plato.

As we saw above, Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's cave allegory focuses in upon an ambiguity in the essence of truth. To bring out the decisive sense in which Plato determines this ambiguity, Heidegger centers upon a passage that immediately follows the cave allegory (517c). In this passage, Heidegger argues that since Plato defines the 'idea of the good' as "enabling both the correctness of knowing and the unhiddenness of the known" (*PDT* 178), Plato's thought 'transforms' the locus of truth from the unconcealment of beings (the emergent process into what is present) to the correctness of apprehending beings (present-ness). Unhiddenness is subordinated by correctness in Plato's thought, Heidegger claims, because the truth of beings no longer rests upon the way in which beings unfold from out of their unhiddenness, but rather in terms of the way in which beings are most clearly seen, i.e. in terms of an eidetic insight into the idea of the good.

As we can see then, Heidegger's reading of Plato is heavily invested in interpretation of Plato's Good (*ágathon*). In contrast to Levinas, for whom an understanding of Plato's Good ultimately depends upon the dimension of the 'beyond' (*epekeina*), Heidegger's interpretation of *to ágathon* does not take into consideration

Socrates' enigmatic formulation at 509b. Instead, Heidegger's interpretation focuses exclusively upon 517c.

Interestingly then, although both Heidegger and Levinas appear to take *to ágathon* to be the most significant feature of Plato's thought, both philosophers interpret its basic meaning in radically different ways. While Heidegger stresses the eidetic aspect of 517c, Levinas highlights the transcendent dimension of 509b. Based on Heidegger's emphasis, he concludes that Plato's thought provides a theoretical framework for reducing beings to the apprehending powers of a human measure. Meanwhile on Levinas' account, Plato's view suggests that an unthematizable transcendence precedes all possible forms of eidetic vision.

For reasons that I have already developed, I do not believe my juxtaposition requires that readers of Heidegger and Levinas make an adjudicating judgment as to who 'got Plato right.' Instead, what is more appropriate is the revealing sense in which this juxtaposition in fact represents a theoretical difference between the two thinkers.

So how does this juxtaposition illustrate their disagreement? To answer this question, I will focus my discussion on the juxtaposition between Levinas' emphasis of 509b contrasted with Heidegger's silence.[105]

I believe a clue to interpreting the significance of this noticeable contrast can be found in a lecture course Levinas delivered in 1975. Speaking on the topic of "Being and Meaning" in Heidegger's thought, Levinas makes the following remark:

> "Heidegger's thesis consists in positing that Being is at the origin of all meaning. This immediately implies that one cannot think beyond Being. All that is meaningful comes back to the understanding of Being"[106]

Levinas goes on to ask whether or not Heidegger's thesis has not overlooked the possibility of a meaning that is 'otherwise than' the domain of Being.[107] In contrast to Heidegger, he names Plato as a philosopher who attempted to think the ultimate source of meaning according to the structure of such a 'beyond.'[108]

As I demonstrated in chapter 3, Levinas' attraction to Plato's 'beyond' (*epekeina*) is its formal structure. He believes it can name, in the language of Western philosophy, a *meta-physical* structure of truth such that what is most basic for thought and existence to encounter is not some knowable essence. Instead, exceeding all the possibilities of *ego-logy* (up to and including Heidegger), Levinas claims Plato's expression can identify a *meaning* that is both primordial and utterly unthematizable.

Since Levinas highlights Plato's expression in this way, he believes it not only illustrates a radical distance that can surpass standard efforts of epistemological mediation (e.g. reason, sensibility, etc.), he believes the radical structure of this expression can even name a distance that is more fundamental than the Heideggerian difference between Being and beings.

If we recall, for Heidegger, the originary source of meaning is grounded by an obedience to a revealing / concealing function that discloses interpretive possibilities in an open region. On his account, *all meaning* rests upon the ontological 'difference' [*Differenz*] between the 'mysterious source' [*Geheimnis*] that releases beings into presence (Being) and those beings which are present (beings). It is in

terms of this primordial difference, Heidegger argues, that thinking can approach that "on the basis of which" something is understood *as* something, viz. the difference between Being and beings *is* meaning.

I believe that the juxtaposition between Levinas' emphasis upon 509b and Heidegger's silence reflects Levinas' overall effort to a name a *meaning* that can exceed the framework of Heideggerian ontology. Furthermore, I submit that Heidegger's silence with respect to interpreting 509b *implies* that the dimension of the 'beyond being' (*epekeina tes ousias*) is indeed peripheral to his attempt to think the meaning of Being. That is, Heidegger's inattention to Plato's *beyond* suggests that the formal structure of this expression indeed escapes his own general project of thinking the difference between Being and beings.

Of course, whether or not Plato's expression *can* in fact name something *meaningful* is an altogether different issue; from a Heideggerian perspective, since the structure of Plato's phrase "is" above *ousias*, it would be difficult to see how Plato could justify this very brief and enigmatic statement.[109] But this is not the issue of my thesis. My basic claim is that this deviation in the reading of Plato sheds light upon the differences between Heidegger and Levinas.

Levinas emphasizes Plato's expression because he believes it can name a distance whose structure is so radical it can exceed the Heideggerian difference between Being and beings. Meanwhile, the fact that Heidegger is silent with respect to 509b suggests that Plato's expression is indeed 'outside' his own theoretical objectives. But this is precisely why Levinas draws so heavily from Plato's

expression. Not, of course, because Heidegger is inattentive toward 509b in his reading of Plato; Levinas is not attempting to criticize Heidegger's interpretation. It is, rather, because Levinas thinks he is naming a difference that surpasses the framework of Heideggerian ontology.

In this way, then, without determining what Plato "actually" had in mind by the *to ágathon*, we can use these two readings as an interpretive tool for approaching the differences between Heidegger and Levinas. Levinas emphasizes the phrase at 509b because he believes its structure can name a *meaning* that escapes the Heideggerian difference between Being and beings. I submit that Heidegger's silence with respect to interpreting 509b even reflects the fact that the structure of this expression exceeds his general theoretical project, i.e. the obscurity of Plato's *epekeina* falls outside the ontological difference. Therefore, whether the structure of Plato's enigmatic expression at 509b can in fact name something *meaningful* or not, the juxtaposition between Levinas' emphasis and Heidegger's silence is instructive for interpreting the differences between the two thinkers; this juxtaposition reflects Levinas' overall attempt to name a *meaningful difference* that escapes the boundaries of Heideggerian ontology.

Conclusion

In my thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate the revealing sense in which 'Plato,' within the thought of Heidegger and Levinas, functions as an interpretive sign for rendering visible basic points of disagreement between the two philosophers. While Heidegger's reading of Plato focuses on a suppression in the *essence of truth* and a fundamental covering over of *Being*, Levinas' Plato implies a *moral concern* and offers a *meta-physical* structure of radical transcendence. By juxtaposing their respective appropriations of Plato, I have argued that the divergence in their readings brings out their theoretical differences on the following three points: i) a concern for justice, ii) the significance of sociality, and iii) a structure of radical transcendence.

In this way, despite whatever interpretive mysteries there might be concerning Plato's own thought, we can see how the *appropriation* of Plato can itself be instructive for uncovering noteworthy hermeneutic features. In my paper, I have focused on demonstrating that the unique ways in which Heidegger and Levinas incorporates Plato opens an interpretive space for exposing basic points at which these two thinkers are fundamentally opposed. I believe the juxtaposition I have performed herein structures an original manner in which to approach the conflict between Heidegger and Levinas.

Endnotes

[1] For numerous reasons to be developed later on in this paper, when the fact that Plato wrote dialogues is coupled with certain metaphilosophical comments made in his *Letters*, it becomes very difficult to straightforwardly ascertain his position within the oeuvre. For contemporary discussions on this hermeneutical issue see: Drew Hyland. *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995) pp. 165-195; Charles Griswold. "Plato's Metaphilosophy: Why Plato wrote Dialogues," in *Platonic Writings: Platonic Readings* ed. Charles Griswold (University Park: Penn State Press, 2002) pp. 143-170; Kenneth Sayre. "Plato's Dialogues in Light of the Seventh Letter," in *Platonic Writings: Platonic Readings* pp. 93-109; and Adriaan Peperzak. *Platonic Transformations: With and After Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 1997) pp. 1-17.

[2] In 1927 A.N. Whitehead famously declared: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato," in *Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978) p. 39. Numerous other sources could be cited to this effect. See also Etienne Gilson *Being and Some Philosophers* (Hague: Europe Printing, 1961) p.17.

[3] These two figures are by no means to be considered 'leaders' of those two directions in contemporary philosophy labeled 'continental' and 'analytic,' but their differing philosophical interests certainly help to identify two noticeable strains of thought. While the former emphasizes a certain clarity of analysis for philosophical topics, the latter has the tendency to reflect more radically on the investment in clarity for certain philosophical issues. See Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* p. 2 for a discussion on this point. For the purposes of my paper, I mention this contrast between Nietzsche and Frege since the issue of Plato / Platonism figured prominently in both of their thinking, yet it curiously did so in remarkably different ways.

[4] I borrow this phrase from Paul Shorey's confident title *What Plato Said* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933). For an informative discussion on the contemporary state of interpretive difficulties in Plato scholarship see Francisco Gonzalez. "A Short History of Platonic Interpretation and the 'Third Way'", in *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield Press, 1993) pp. 1-24. See also Alan C. Bowen. "On Interpreting Plato," in *Platonic Writings: Platonic Readings* pp. 49-65; E.N. Tigerstedt. *Interpreting Plato* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wicksell, 1977).

[5] On Heidegger's reading of Plato see: Hyland, pp. 139-163; Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* pp. 57-112; Stanley Rosen. "Heidegger's Interpretation of Plato," in *The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry* (New York: Routledge, 1988) pp. 127-147, and *The Question of Being: A Reversal of Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press) pp. ix-45; John Sallis. *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics, 2nd ed.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) pp. 170-185; Robert Bernasconi. *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1985) pp. pp. 15-28; Robert Dostal. "Beyond Being: Heidegger's Plato," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (Vol. 23, 1985) pp. 71-98; Jonathan Barnes. "Heidegger spéléologue," in *Revue de metaphysique et de morale* (Vol. 95, 1990) pp. 173-195; Alan Kim. "Shades of Truth: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Allegory of the Cave," (publication forthcoming) 2003; and Paul Friedlander. *Plato: An Introduction* (New York: Harper Row, 1958) pp. 221-229.

[6] On Levinas' reading of Plato see: Stella Sandford. "Plato and Levinas: The Same and the Other," in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (Vol. 30, 1999) pp. 131-150, and *The Metaphysics of Love: Gender and Transcendence in Levinas* (London: Athlone Press, 2000) pp. 1-31; Adriaan

Peperzak. *Platonic Transformations* pp. 113-121, and *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993) pp. 13 and 38-50; Brian Schroeder. *Altared Ground: Levinas, History and Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1996) pp. 1-43; and Jacques Derrida. "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) pp. 85-89 and 127.

Adriaan Peperzak speculates that the unfamiliarity with the journal *Annales de l'Université de Paris* might help to explain why "Levinas' 'Platonism' has not received much attention in the abundant literature on his work" (*Platonic Transformations*, p. 113). This journal published a one page summary in which Levinas described the outline of *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas concludes the outline by naming his text as a "return to Platonism [*retrouver le platonisme*]." See "Resumé de *Totalité et Infini*," *Annales de l'Université de Paris* (Sorbonne: Paris V, 1961) n. 3, p. 386.

[7] This assessment is based upon my research of the above cited texts. I should note, however, that the inspiration to juxtapose the two readings comes from Peperzak's text *Platonic Transformations*. In this book, Peperzak devotes separate chapters to Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas, analyzing the different ways in which each philosopher understood Plato. Although Peperzak does not attempt to specifically juxtapose Heidegger and Levinas in their respective readings, Peperzak's masterful analysis in each chapter makes it clear that there are remarkable differences between the various appropriations.

[8] Levinas' early support of Heidegger is signaled in two places. 1. Much of his 'critique' of Husserl in his 1930 dissertation *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* trans. A. Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989) rests on Heideggerian ground. See especially pp. xxxiii and 154-155. 2. In 1932, Levinas published an essay on Heidegger that was meant to form a book length study on his thought. The essay was titled "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," trans. Committee of Public Safety in *Diacritics*, 26, I (1996) pp. 11-32. For commentary on both of these points see Adriaan Peperzak. *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* p. 12; and Stella Sandford. *Metaphysics of Love: Gender and Transcendence in Levinas* p. 8. I will develop these issues further in Chapter 3 of my thesis.

[9] For Heidegger's own definition of "fundamental ontology" see: Martin Heidegger. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) p. 1.

[10] In order to bring out the very general character of this disagreement, I borrow this phrasing from Adriaan Peperzak's "Global Characterization of Levinas' Attitude toward Heidegger's Thought" in *To the Other*, pp. 12-14.

[11] Heidegger *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. xvii.

[12] See note 1.

[13] John Sallis. *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues, 3rd edition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) p. 1

[14] My understanding of Plato is informed by much of the secondary commentary already cited. Other texts to be considered include: Stanley Rosen. *Plato's Sophist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); John Sallis. *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*; Etienne Gilson. *Being and Some Philosophers*; Gregory Vlastos. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); *Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology* ed. Gregory Vlastos (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971); and Frank J. Yartz. *Ancient Greek Philosophy: Sourcebook and Perspective* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Publishers, 1984).

[15] See Sayre's discussion for a commentary on this point (pp. 93-109). It is worth noting that whomever the author, the *Letters* were written during Plato's lifetime and the author demonstrates well informed knowledge of Plato's life.

[16] It should be noted that the subject of the sentence is not explicitly clear. "Philosophic" is how Sayre interprets it on p. 95. See also W.H. Walsh. *Metaphysics* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1963) p. 32.

[17] This has led many to speculate that Plato's 'real' views were advanced orally in the Academy. See Ibid.; and Konrad Gaiser. "Plato's Enigmatic Lecture 'On the Good'," in *Phronesis* (25: 1980) pp. 5-37.

[18] The two exceptions being the *Apology* and the letters.

[19] See Griswold pp. 143-170; Rosemary Desjardins. "Why Dialogues? Plato's Serious Play," in *Platonic Writings: Platonic Readings*, pp. 110-125; and Drew Hyland pp. 1-11.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Such an interpretation can be found in Gregory Vlastos. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, p. 117. In a footnote (n. 50), Vlastos remarks that such an interpretive principle may have certain implications, but that it is still "the grand methodological hypothesis on which my whole interpretation of Socrates-in-Plato is predicated."

[22] Many of the difficulties I raise here are based on the observations of: Hyland, pp. 165-195; Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* pp. ix-17; and Jacob Howland. "Re-Reading Plato. The Problem of Platonic Chronology," in *Phoenix* (Vol. 45, 1991) pp. 189-214.

[23] As one example, see: Plato. *Parmenides*, trans. Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan (Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1996). In this dialogue it is commonly recognized that Parmenides leads the discussion.

[24] As one example, see: Plato. *Sophist*, trans. William S. Cobb (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 1990). The main part of the content of this dialogue takes place between Theatetus and the Eleatic Visitor.

[25] A defense of this position can be found in Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* pp. 46-47. Howland (p.196, n. 16) cites eight other texts where this position can be found.

[26] Vlastos, Ibid. pp. 45-80. See Hyland p. 3 for commentary on this point.

[27] Howland's commentary on this matter is worth noting. Speaking of 'psychologizing' Plato he writes: "In the first place, it depends upon the *a priori* assumption that a certain modern conception of the psychology of the philosopher, the nature of philosophic writing, and the relationship between the two may be fittingly applied to the interpretation of the dialogues. While we cannot here explore the intrinsic plausibility of this conception of the psyche (including the 'unconscious') and psychological evolution, we may note that defenders of the standard view are obliged to undertake such an exploration" p. 204.

[28] Hyland considers the suggestion that commentators are right to attribute a 'theory of Ideas' to Plato since this is in fact what Aristotle did in the *Metaphysics* at 1078b9 and 1078b12. Hyland points out (pp. 169-170) however, that although both Vlastos (p. 91) and Ross (p. 894) translate these passages as "theory of Ideas," in neither place does the Greek refer to a 'theory,' nor is a capitalization really necessary. Where the Greek says *ten kata ten idean doxan* and *he peri ton eidon doxa*, Howland

suggests a more accurate translation would be: "the *opinion* about the ideas" and "the *opinion* concerning the forms." See Aristotle. "Metaphysics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* trans. W.D. Ross (New York: the Modern Library, 2001). Howland raises the following question concerning the identification of a specific theory in Plato's dialogues: "What if the dialogues, for all the arguments contained within them, do not themselves contain a philosophic teaching in the specified sense – if Plato, in this crucial respect, stands apart from the History of Western Philosophy?" p. 199. Peperzak suggests that although speaking in the fashion of 'theories' and 'doctrines' is helpful, such speech must be alert to what it might be covering over. See Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* p. 230, n.6 for a discussion on this point.

[29] Rosen. "Is Metaphysics Possible?," in *Review of Metaphysics* (Vol. 45, 1991) p. 242. (My italics).

[30] As one example of the preponderance of attributing a 'theory of Ideas' to Plato see the scholarly discussions in Vlastos' collection *Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology – A Collection of Critical Essays*.

[31] See Ibid. The very title of the collection suggests such classifications. Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* (p. 230 n.6) and Hyland (pp. 168-171) both discuss the implications of making these *a priori* categorizations on Plato's dialogues.

[32] Howland's essay is particularly instructive on this point.

[33] Ibid., pp. 200-203.

[34] Ibid. pp. 200-205. Howland points out that it would be odd to think that Plato underwent a 'development' but didn't think it was necessary to alert his readers to this fact (p. 203). Howland makes the following comment concerning the hypothesis that Plato must have 'overlooked his own evolution': "I submit…that it seems both ungenerous and self-defeating to begin one's study of a philosophical text (or any text considered to be worth reading) by assuming that the author fundamentally misunderstood the nature of his own writing" (p. 205).

[35] This is perhaps most clear in the *Parmenides* dialogue since the age of the characters do not match up with historical estimates.

[36] Ibid., p. 205.

[37] Wolfgang Wieland. *Platon und die Formen des Wissen* (Göttingen, 1982) p. 86. For help on the translation of this passage I would like to thank Ian Drummond and Alexander Rueger, University of Alberta 2003. I accept full responsibility for any error in translation. In the German the passage reads as follows:

"Fragen, Behauptungen, Andeutungen, Erwähnungen, Gleichnisse, Hinweise auf scheinbare Selbstverständlichkeiten. Es mag sein, dass diese Dinge der Sache nach nur auf der Basis einer umfassenden Theorie verständlich gemacht werden können. Doch eine solche Theorie wäre ihrem Status nach in jedem Fall eine Rekonstruktion des Interpreten."

[38] Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 50.

[39] Martin Heidegger. "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," in *Pathmarks* trans. Thomas Sheehan, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 181-82. German text: "Platons Lehre Von Der Wahrheit," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1967) pp. 109-144.

[40] See note 4a.

[41] See Rosen *The Question of Being*, p. 1.

[42] Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). German text: *Sein und Zeit*, 7th edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960).

[43] Martin Heidegger. "On the Essence of Truth," in *PM*, trans. John Sallis, pp. 136-154. German text: "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," in *Wegmarken*, pp. 73-98. Although originally published in 1943, this essay touches upon material dating back to various public lectures delivered under the same title (1930: Bremen, Marburg and Freiburg; 1932: Dresden). After its initial publication, Heidegger would later revise the essay several times. The fifth edition was published in 1967.

[44] Although the essay (*PM*, pp. 155-182) was originally published in 1942, the content of the text dates back to a lecture course delivered during the winter of 1931-32 (see Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* 71, for a discussion on the interpretive confusion of this date). The title of this lecture course was similar to that of the essay "On the Essence of Truth." It is now available in English translation. See Martin Heidegger. *The Essence of Truth*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2002). German text: *Gesamtausgabe* 34 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988).

[45] Although my reading is largely based on this essay, it is worth pointing out that Heidegger's interpretation of Plato does seem to alter, slightly, throughout his career.

Some commentators follow Dostal's claim that (p. 71) "the critique of Plato remains essentially the same throughout Heidegger's work." See Hyland p. 141, n. 155 as one example. I believe, moderately against this claim, that there appear to be two changes in Heidegger's reading throughout his career. For the purposes of my thesis however, I do not think that either change significantly alters the issue of the different ways in which Heidegger and Levinas read Plato.

The first change concerns Heidegger's 'early' (1927-1930) reference to the enigmatic 'Good beyond being" from 509b of the *Republic*. This reference stands in marked contrast to Heidegger's total neglect of this expression in the 1940 essay "Plato's Doctrine of Truth." Although Heidegger's neglect of this passage in 1940 is central to the issue of contrasting Levinas and Heidegger in their reading of Plato, Heidegger's 'early' attention to this passage is still only marginal at best, and therefore, unlike Levinas, still fails to take the 'Good beyond being' into central consideration. As an example of his peripheral 'early' treatment, see his 1927 *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) In this text, Heidegger claims that although the *epekeina tes ousias* constitutes the goal of fundamental ontological thinking (p. 285), he further states that, due to its 'obscurity,' he will not attempt to enter into an interpretation of what Plato has in mind by the 'beyond.' Therefore, although Heidegger's 'early' attention to 509b differs from his later neglect, since: i) the early treatment still fails to interpret the passage, and ii) still fails to consider any significance that the 'beyond' may have for properly approaching the difference between Being and beings (the ontological difference), the refusal to consider the significance of 509b in the reading of Plato still remains a constant in both texts. See Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* (p. 94) for a discussion on this point. In this way, since Heidegger effectively does not emphasize 509b in either work, the difference between Levinas and Heidegger on this passage can still be based upon Heidegger's 1940 text.

The second apparent change in Heidegger's reading concerns his 'later' (1958-1964) retraction of the 1940 claim that Plato's thought underwent a 'transformation' [*Wandel*] in the essence of truth. As we will see above, in the 1940 essay, Heidegger argues that Plato's thought transformed the locus of truth from the early Greek experience of unconcealment in favor of the correctness of vision. However in a

1964 essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of thinking" *Basic Writings*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper Row, 1977), Heidegger says:

"[w]e must acknowledge the fact that *alétheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the opening of presence, was originally experienced only as *orthotes*, as the correctness of representations and statements. But then the assertion about the essential transformation of truth, that is, from unconcealment to correctness, is also untenable" (p. 390).

Many commentators speculate that Heidegger's retraction is based upon his various encounters with the Plato scholar and classicist Paul Friedlander. See Bernasconi pp. 17-27 for an analysis on this point. Whatever the motivation or status of this retraction however, the issue of the contrast between Heidegger's and Levinas' reading of Plato remains basically the same. It remains the same, because, I believe, Heidegger's 're-reading' has more to do with the pre-Socratics than it does with Plato, i.e. a 'transformation' from pre-Socratics or not, for Heidegger, Plato still determines the ultimate locus of truth in terms of the correct accordance of eidetic vision. Moreover, in the very same essay Heidegger still claims that "all metaphysics, including its opponent, positivism, speaks the language of Plato" (p. 386). Therefore, since on Heidegger's 'later' account: i) Plato is still a decisive figure for the metaphysical tradition (which requires overcoming), and ii) the reading of Plato is still in terms of a privileging of eidetic vision in the locus of truth, Heidegger's 'later' reading of Plato is effectively the same as his 1940 essay. In this way, I believe that the 1940 essay is sufficient unto itself for bringing out the contrast between Levinas and Heidegger.

[46] Following a standard practice in the English translation of Heidegger, whenever applicable, I will translate *Sein* as Being and *Seiende / Seienden* as being(s). They will be distinguished by capitalization since the important difference between the two are difficult to observe in the English language. Kim (p. 34, n. 69) explains this peculiarity of English as follows: "'Sein' is the gerundive form of the verb 'to be,' while "Seiende" is a participle. The substantive form of the participle is the neuter noun, "das Seiende," which literally means "the being [thing]," i.e. 'entity.' This distinction between Sein and Seiende is common in many other languages; the isomorphism of the participial and gerundive forms is a peculiarity of English."

[47] Later on in *Being and Time*, Heidegger in fact defines *meaning* as "that in 'terms of which' [*Woraufhin*] something becomes intelligible as something" (*BT* 142 / *SZ* 151). By defining the issue of meaning so similarly to the issue of Being, this chiasmus suggests that the question concerning the meaning of being *is* in fact the question regarding the being of meaning.

[48] Of course, it is worth highlighting that Heidegger claims the advancement of the *question* concerning the meaning of Being originally occurs in *Being and Time*. See Martin Heidegger. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) p. 84: "In *Sein und Zeit* the question of the meaning of being is raised and developed *as a question* for the first time in the history of philosophy." This suggests that although the issue of the meaning of Being was recognized in ancient Greek thought, the explicit exposition of the meaning of Being *as a question* for philosophy is not raised until Heidegger's thinking.

[49] As Heidegger emphasizes elsewhere, this 'forgetting' is not something that philosophers need to be simply reminded of (as though it had 'slipped their mind'); rather, the obliviousness to Being relates to the way in which Being itself presences: See Martin Heidegger, "On the Question of Being," in *Pathmarks*, trans. William McNeill. Heidegger says (p. 314):

"We still remain far removed from a determination of the essence of 'oblivion' [*Vergessenheit*]. Yet even where we have caught sight of the essence of oblivion in its full extent, we all too readily run the danger of understanding oblivion merely as a human act or activity.

People have indeed tended to represent the "oblivion of being" as though, to say it by way of an image, being were the umbrella that has been left sitting somewhere through the forgetfulness of some philosophy professor.

Yet oblivion does not simply *befall* the essence of being, as something apparently separate from the latter. It belongs to the issue of being itself, prevails as a destiny of its essence."

[50] Thomas Langan. *The Meaning of Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) p. 130.

[51] Heidegger's essays have a tendency to begin with a 'usual' understanding (of where we always already are) in order to uncover those conditions that this everyday understanding holds. See, for example, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Row, 1977) pp. 3-35. In this essay Heidegger begins his analysis with the familiar understanding of technology in order to think it through to is underlying conditions.

[52] Heidegger qualifies his beginning with the Medieval formula by calling it the "most recent origin" [*nächsten Ursprung*] (*PM* 138). He therefore suggests that the Medieval model is underpinned by some earlier account.

[53] It is worth noting that by shifting the issue of *essence* Heidegger's thought is *not* equivocating terms (as though it were a failure in his reasoning), nor is he abandoning the prior model of essence as *quidditas*. Rather, he is incorporating the earlier model by attempting to think through essence in all its possible forms.

Furthermore, in this context, it is also worth noting that his thinking of *essence* in the transcendental sense of 'condition of possibility' signals the temporal / historical sense of essence (viz. as Kantian).

[54] It is unclear what motivates and justifies Heidegger's introduction of the 'open region.' Although he demonstrates the insufficiency of the earlier model of correspondence since it fails to explain the "manifest differences" between statements and things, he does not appear to explain *why* the 'open region' should be the next object of consideration, and furthermore, whether the 'open region' is itself a rigorously philosophical concept or whether it is a metaphor intended to introduce a deeper notion. Most likely, Heidegger is setting forth concepts that are familiar and obvious to the reader, viz. spatial distance, in order to approach something that is only vaguely understood or recognized.

In this context though, it is important to notice that Heidegger's introduction of an 'open region' seems to block, in advance, any transcendental idealist account that claims the subject 'creates' the dimension of openness. Instead, Heidegger's presentation suggests that one 'enters into' an open region that is already opened up.

[55] See note 5. Especially: Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* pp. 76-82; Bernasconi pp. 15-28; Kim pp. 18-21; and Friedländer pp. 221-229.

[56] Kim (p. 35, n. 75) claims that Heidegger was not the first to name *alétheia* as something like "unhiddenness." He cites Passow's lexicon of 1831. Franz Passow. *Handwörterbuch der Griechischen Sprache*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1831).

[57] My presentation of this formulation is heavily influenced by Kim's reading (n. 76).

[58] For ease of explanation, I have taken the liberty to substitute the general term "originary disclosure" in the place of "as a whole." Concerning the "as a whole," Heidegger's text reads: "every mode of comportment…is drawn up into beings as a whole. The openedeness of beings as a whole does not

coincide with the sum of all immediately familiar beings" (*PM* 147). For Heidegger, the "as a whole" is not some being, nor is it the sum of all possible beings. Rather, the "as a whole" is the contextual openness in which Da-sein, as 'always already' attuned towards, is exposed to the disclosure of particular beings. Although "originary disclosure" is not explicitly named in the above passage, the term does serve the purpose of describing what Heidegger believes is being passed over as "incalculable and incomprehensible," i.e. the original disclosing of beings as opposed to either some being or the totality of beings.

[59] Martin Heidegger. *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, trans. unknown (New York: Harper Row, 1970).

[60] Ibid., pp. 105-109.

[61] In the secondary literature, commentary concerning Heidegger's appeal to the "unsaid" [*Ungedachte*] in Plato's thought is typically met with a form of puzzlement. See e.g. Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations* pp. 72 and 80-82; and Hyland p. 140 n. 153. It is perhaps worth noting in this context that Heidegger's lecture course of 1931-32 did not specifically name an appeal to the "unsaid."

[62] Heidegger cites Aquinas' formula: *veritate proprie invenitur in intellectu humano vel divino* ("Truth is properly encountered in the human or in the divine intellect") as representative of medieval scholasticism.

[63] To bring out the influence of the Medieval formula in Modern times, Heidegger names Descartes' thesis: *veritatem proprie vel falsitatem non nisi in* ("Truth or falsehood in the proper sense can nowhere else be found but in the intellect alone").

[64] Heidegger claims that the "modern era enters its 'fulfillment' [*Vollendung*]" in the thought of Nietzsche. He cites the following quote from the *Will to Power*: "*Truth is the kind of error* without which a certain kind of living being could not live. In the final analysis, the value for life is what is decisive." Although many might argue that Nietzsche radically overturns the Medieval and Modern formulas, Heidegger maintains: "If for Nietzsche truth is a kind of error, then its essence consists in a way of thinking that always, indeed necessarily, falsifies the real, specifically insofar as every act of representing halts the continual "becoming" and, in erecting its established facts against the flow of "becoming," sets up as the supposedly real something that does not correspond – i.e., something incorrect and thus erroneous. Nietzsche's determination of truth as the incorrectness of thinking is in agreement with the traditional essence of truth as the correctness of assertions. Nietzsche's concept of truth displays the last glimmer of the most extreme consequence of the change of truth from the unhiddenness of beings to the correctness of the gaze" (*PM* 179).

[65] Either as the 'highest of beings' (e.g. the scholastic infinite) or as the 'common denominator of beings' (e.g. as universal or genus, i.e. the *koinon* (commonness of beings)).

[66] See note 6. "Rediscover" is my translation of *retrouver*. Peperzak translates it as "return" (*Platonic Transformations*, p. 121), while Sandford (*Metaphysics of Love*, p. 7) offers "rediscover, recover or re-encounter." I think 'rediscover' best captures the root of '*-trouve*' (discover, find). In any event, the sense of the term seems to suggest a 'meeting again' or a 'retrieval of what has been overlooked.' It might even be suggested that Levinas' *retrouver* echoes Heidegger's *Wiederholung* (repetition, retrieval). Heidegger opens *Being and Time* with a call for the "explicit *Widerholung* of the question of Being" (*BT* 1, *SZ* 2).

[67] Schroeder makes this same observation. He says: "Levinas alludes numerous times to Platonic motifs in his writings though he never fully develops the connection between his thinking and Plato's; the burden is left to the reader" (p. 22).

[68] Levinas *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, p. 155.

[69] See Peperzak *To the Other*, p. 4.

[70] Levinas. "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," trans. Committee of Public Safety, *Diacritics*, 26, 1 (1996), pp. 11-32. French: "Martin Heidegger et l'ontologie" *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 1994) pp. 53-76.

[71] The translation of this line is from Sandford *Metaphysics of Love*, p. 8. "Martin Heidegger et l'ontologie," p. 57.

[72] Levinas. "Signature," trans. Adriaan Peperzak in *Research in Phenomenology* (VIII, 1978) p. 177.

[73] Levinas. "Interview with Francois Poirié," in *Is it Righteous to Be?* ed. Jill Robins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) p. 32.

[74] Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981).

[75] This movement is captured in the French title *De l'existence a l'existent*. Rendered literally in English the title says: "From Existence to the Existent." See Peperzak *To the Other*, pp.4-5 for a discussion on this point.

[76] I borrow this phrasing from Sandford's commentary in *Metaphysics of Love*, p. 10.

[77] By terming *existence* the *il y a*, it is unclear whether or not Levinas is explicitly naming the 'ontological gift' of Heidegger's *es gibt*. My analysis above is simplifying this issue in order to focus the theme of Levinas difficulty with indeterminate Being and the way in which it appears to relate to Heideggerian ontology.

[78] Levinas terms this event of extraction *hypostasis* (*EE* 45, 82, 83).

[79] It is an accepted convention in the English translation of Levinas to translate *autrui* as Other and *autre* as other. While the latter term [*autre*] refers to otherness in general, the former [*autrui*] has the stronger sense of a personal other. See Richard Cohen's "Translator's Note," in *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Press, 1987) p. viii. As Lingis notes however, by rendering these terms in this way the translation "sacrifice[s] the possibility of reproducing the author's use of capital or small letters with both these terms in the French text" (*TI* n. 1 p. 24-25). My thesis will follow common practice.

[80] This can even be seen, for example, in the passage (*BW* 6) cited above when Levinas names the 'Other' [*Autrui*] 'a being' [*étant*]. In his later book *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, Levinas tries to get away from the language of ontology by speaking of the encounter with the Other in terms of the 'beyond' [*au-delá*] being. Levinas himself noted this need to move away from the language of ontology in the 1987 Preface to the German edition to *Totality and Infinity*. He says: "*Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence* already avoids the ontological – or more exactly, *eidetic* – language which *Totality and Infinity* incessantly resorts to" (p. 197). See Levinas. "*Totality and Infinity*. Preface to the German Edition," trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav in *Entre Nous* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[81] Adriaan Peperzak devotes almost half of his book *To the Other* to discussions on the essay "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" and the book *Totality and Infinity*. He says (p. 38) that the former

essay affords the best introduction to the latter text. In Sandford's book *The Metaphysics of Love*, she includes the essay "Transcendence and Height" and says (p. 13) that these three text form "something of a centerpiece, in which unfolds the basic theoretical framework of the mature work prior to *Otherwise Than Being* and in which emerges, contra Husserl and Heidegger, the distinctively 'Levinasian' position."

[82] I should note, of course, that Levinas does not use this specific heading to term the second sense of truth. Although he names the first account of truth *meta-physical*, he does not award a title to truth in the secondary sense. For ease of presentation however, I taken the liberty to name the latter version of truth *freedom of ego-logy*. I believe much of what is said in the context of his presentation (e.g. autonomy, the privileging of ego, etc.) suggests that this heading is appropriate.

[83] Interestingly, in an editor's note to this essay Peperzak remarks that Levinas borrows these two terms from 254b-256b of Plato's *Sophist* (*CPP* n. 3 p. 48). This would certainly seem to suggest a point of reference for connecting Levinas to Plato. However, as Sandford argues in her essay "Plato and Levinas: the Same and the Other," it is unclear how and in what sense this connection could be interpreted. She points out that although Levinas' *Même* and *Autrui* sound similar to two of the *Sophist*'s 'highest genera' *tauton* and *heteron*, the specific content of the *Sophist*'s terms are anything but 'Levinasian.' Unlike Levinas' view of *Autrui* as absolute, particular, irreducible and beyond being, the *Sophist* defines *heteron* as relative, universal, and most importantly, *within* the dominance of the 'highest genus' *Being* (p. 138). Levinas himself even seems to be aware of the fact that the *Sophist*'s *heteron* names something that cannot contest the domination of 'ontology.' He says at the beginning of *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*: "But what is *Being's other*? Among the five "genera" of the *Sophist* a genus opposed to being is lacking, even though since the *Republic* there has been a question of what is beyond essence" (p. 3). Following Sandford, I suggest that since the terms of Plato's *Sophist* seem to interpret Otherness in an "anti-Levinasian" (p. 137) manner, it is very difficult to see what sort of a connection there might be between Levinas and Plato's *Sophist*. Perhaps, at best, one can say Levinas is recovering a question from 254e of this text: "But what do we mean by these words, the 'same' and the 'other,' which we have just used?" This seems to be what Peperzak has in mind with his editor's note (see his book *To the Other*, pp. 45-46). However, it is important to point out that Levinas' published works never explicitly reference such a connection to Plato's *Sophist*.

[84] This account of the epistemological reduction between Same and Other may appear strange to empiricist philosophers. For example, since John Locke argued that *all* of the ideas in the mind could be accounted for by experience, this would seem to suggest a framework that does not attempt to privilege the primacy of the ego, but which rather implies that there is always already something 'beyond' or 'outside' consciousness. See John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Everyman, 1988). Following Sandford's commentary however (*Metaphysics of Love*, p. 14 n. 39), it is important to notice that Locke's description of the *acquisition of ideas* seems to depend upon a ready-made adequation between mind and world. He says: "The senses at first let in particular ideas and furnish the yet empty cabinet; and the mind by degrees of growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them" (Locke, p. 11). On Locke's account, the basic realities of the world appear to be, in advance, predisposed to "fit" with ideas. Therefore his account does not consider the possibility of a reality that could radically 'exceed' consciousness (i.e a reality that does not fit into the cabinet). Levinas would most likely claim that such an empiricist view is as much a reduction of the Other to the Same as the severest of idealisms.

[85] "Deformalized" is how Levinas terms the process by which the formal determinations of *Même* and *Autrui* become meaningful by proving their reality in concrete phenomena. See *TI*, p. 50.

[86] Levinas emphasizes this point in a 1981 interview with Philippe Nemo. See Levinas. *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University

Press, 1985). In this interview Levinas says of the 'face': "You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is superficially the face is what cannot be reduced to that" (p. 85-86).

[87] Sandford *Metaphysics of Love*, p. 26.

[88] Many commentators use this heading to describe Levinas' basic theoretical project. As an example, see the collection of essays assembled under this title in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion* ed. Adriaan Peperzak (New York: Routledge, 1995). See also eds. Jean Greisch and Jacques Rolland. *Emmanuel Levinas. L'éthique comme philosophie première* (Paris: Du Cerf, 1993) Actes du colloque de Cersiy-la-Salle, 23 août – 2 septembre 1986. Levinas himself used this expression as a title for one of his essays: see Levinas. "Ethics as First Philosophy" in *The Levinas Reader*, trans. Sean Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[89] See note 6.

[90] Ibid.

[91] I use the expression 'well-known' since the typical understanding of Plato in contemporary philosophy concerns his 'classical' view of universals, viz. of unifying manyness to the similarity of oneness (the common).

[92] Sandford highlights the same point. See *Metaphysics of Love*, p. 30.

[93] Plato's *Meno* (80de). See Plato. "Meno," in *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) p. 880.

[94] See, for example, Plato's *Meno* 80d-82a (p. 880-881); *Phaedo* 72e-77c (pp. 63-68); *Phaedrus* 249b (p. 527); and *Theatetus* 150a-151d (p. 167-168).

[95] See *TI* pp. 43, 51, 54, 67, 89, 92, and 97.

[96] Both Sandford and Peperzak name this appeal to Plato as Levinas' most prominent reference. See Sandford *Metaphysics of Love*, p. 31 and "The Same and the Other" p. 145; Peperzak *Platonic Transformations*, p. 118.

[97] *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence* is in fact a double translation of Plato's *epekeina tes ousias*. Levinas appears to have first appropriated Plato's expression in the 1957 essay "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" (*CPP* 53) and his work thereafter ceaselessly continued to incorporate Plato's phrase. Levinas discusses Plato's expression in four different places within his first major work *Totality and Infinity* (*TI*, pp. 80, 102-1-4, 218 and 292).

[98] See for example Gilson, p. 20.

[99] See note 83. In discussing the *Sophist*, Sandford (*Metaphysics of Love* p. 138) demonstrates that despite Plato's distinction between otherness and being: "not-being is [still] to be counted as one class among the many classes of being" (*Sophist* 258c). This suggests that being [*ousias*] is the ultimate horizon for all possible *eide*. Levinas himself explicitly recognizes this point while speaking of the *Sophist*: "Essence lays claim to recuperate and cover over every ex-ception: negativity, nothingness

and, as far back as Plato, not-being which 'in a certain sense is'." The above quote is translated by Sandford (p. 138). The French text can be found in: Levinas. "Autrement de l'essence" in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (June-September: n. 3, 1970) p. 270.

[100] Of course, Levinas' appeal to Plato is not his only reference to a select moment in the history of Western philosophy. He also emphasizes the transcendent dimension of Descartes "idea of the infinite" in the third meditation from his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980) pp. 67-77. See *TI* pp. 25, 48-52, 168-174, 195-197.

[101] Peperzak *Platonic Transformations*, p. 117.

[102] Levinas. "Dialogue on Thinking-of-the-Other" in *Entre Nous*, p. 204.

[103] See Introducation and Chapter 1.

[104] Ibid.

[105] It is important to notice that the juxtaposition between their different views of Plato's Good could take on other forms. For example, Heidegger's emphasis of 517c could be juxtaposed with Levinas' silence. However, for my purposes, since Levinas is not offering a reading of the cave allegory in the sense that Heidegger is (Heidegger's analysis suggests a much more broader attempt to render Plato's Good) I believe the juxtaposition raised above is more fruitful for observing a basic point of disagreement. That is, given that i) unlike Levinas, Heidegger *is* offering a reading of the cave allegory, and ii) given that Heidegger interprets the cave allegory's significance in terms of a passage that in fact falls outside the cave story (517c), I believe Heidegger's silence with respect to 509b is much more prominent and noteworthy than Levinas' silence on 517c.

[106] Levinas. *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford university Press, 2000) p. 126.

[107] Ibid. p. 126-127

[108] Ibid.

[109] Levinas even points this out in his 1975 lecture course. He says: "The [*beyond being*] is what, for Heidegger, would be scarcely defensible" (Ibid.).

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